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ABSTRACT

The 24 articles in this special journal resulted from the Licking County (Ohio) Writing Project. The articles provide information about the following: (1) how to motivate students and teachers, (2) prewriting activities, (3) lightening the teacher's grading load, (4) the uses of conferences, (5) sustained silent reading, (6) traditional techniques to teach sentence combining, (7) using imitation of master writers as a means of teaching style, (8) group writing, (9) ungraded student writing, (10) a writing process exercise for teachers, (11) approaches to grading, (12) the one-room school, (13) an exercise in which students write a new ending for a short story, and (14) the benefits of the writing project for those involved. (JL)

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FOCUS: TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Volume VIII

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Number 3

THE LICKING COUNTY WRITING PROJECT

Contents

Page

THE LICKING COUNTRY WRITING PROJECT: HOW IT HAPPENED by Sewall S. Phelps.	1
WRITING AS A HUMAN NEED: PLEASURE, NOT PUNISHMENT by June Berkley.	6
PREWRITING POSSIBILITIES by Judy Haney.	16
LIGHTENING THE PAPER LOAD by Norma Nutter.	20
POTPOURRI OF NEW IDEAS by Kathy R. Strohl	25
MOTIVATING THE RELUCTANT TEACHER by Phyllis Fischer	34
TELL ME, DON'T WRITE ME! by Elizabeth E. Lane	39
YOU CAN GET AN OUTFIT AND KEEP A JOURNAL TOO! by Judith Keck	43
BUT WHY? by Barbara Moore	48
SUSTAINED SILENT WRITING by Elizabeth A. Wagenknecht.	51
PEER-CONFERENCING AS A TOOL IN LIGHTENING THE PAPER LOAD by Gloria Shanaberg.	54
OPERATION SATURATION by Peggy L. Papritan	57
HOW I USED TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES TO TEACH SENTENCE COMBINING by Steven M. Connor.	69

BEATITUDES OF A FUNDAMENTALIST	
by Rebecca Heaps	75
WRITE IN STYLE: IMITATING THE MASTERS	
by Cindy Kelley.	80
STUDENTS CAN WRITE RIGHT	
by Susan L. Sherhag.	83
DON'T GRADE THAT PAPER...	
by Karen Puckett	89
LOST AT "C" -- SAILING THROUGH WRITING	
by T. Allen Priest	91
3 X 5: NOT TOO SMALL AT ALL!	
by Judith Keck	96
FOLLOWING THE RED-LINKED ROAD	
by David Kass.	100
IN A STATE OF FLUX	
by Barb Whyte.	107
THE ONE-FOOM SCHOOL REVISITED	
by Ron Walsh	113
NEW ENDINGS FOR "LENINGEN VERSUS THE ANTS"	
by Alice Phillips.	117
STIMULUS TO TEACHER GROWTH: THE LICKING COUNTY WRITING PROJECT	
by Betty Lou Stull	122

THE LICKING COUNTY WRITING PROJECT: HOW IT HAPPENED

by
SEWALL S. PHELPS

This issue of FOCUS actually began two years ago when the language arts consultant in our office came to me with the idea of starting a project to help English teachers update practices in their teaching of writing. We conducted a survey and found that these teachers did, indeed, feel the need to discover some new approaches.

- They felt over burdened, they said, with too many papers to read and correct. (The paper load they called it.)
- They said, they'd tried correcting everything on every paper (bleeding was the word they used) and that this had corrected nothing!
- They felt their students should write more, and yet, they didn't know what to do with all the papers when they did write more.
- And, on top of all this, they said, "We break our creative necks to think of something exciting for students to write about and they dash off some half-done response then loudly complain 'But I did it, already.' when we ask them to revise, edit, or correct."

Clearly these teachers needed help; and I was just beginning to understand the problem

The Initial Planning Group

After a couple of false starts, the project began to take shape in the summer of 1981 as we prepared to make application to the Ohio Department of Education for a Basic Skills Subgrant. We gathered together a planning group consisting of two teachers (Barb Whyte, Peg Papritan), a university representative (Dr. James Davis), a parochial school representative (Father Noble), our county language arts consultant (Judith Keck), and me, director of curriculum.

This group was chosen carefully to represent what we believed were the necessary elements of a successful project. First, teachers had to be involved in the planning from the start; all data collected on successful in-service programs has shown this. The grant required, and we agreed, that we should seek non-public school participation; hence, Father Noble. A university representative was chosen for two reasons: we believed that offering this project for credit would be an incentive and we felt that Dr. Davis would have

access to resources which we in the county office did not have. Two county office consultants provided the necessary administrative connections to make this project school-based (Judy Keck visited and tried out several newly-found techniques with participants in their classrooms) and to provide communication across the eight districts involved.

Goals of the Project

Our initial planning group established the following general parameters for the project:

- A. Participants would be involved in planning the project at an intensive first meeting.
- B. Meetings would be held periodically over the course of a school-year so that participants would have chances to try out different strategies and react back to the group.
- C. Participants would be encouraged to become teacher-researchers, seekers for successful classroom practices for teaching writing.
- D. Participants would share their successes or failures by contributing to a dissemination document which could be shared with other teachers. This became this issue of Focus.
- E. All participants would become more aware of the writing process by writing themselves.

What the Funding Paid For

The application was completed, submitted, and, in October, given approval for funding. The amount of the project: \$5,000.

I am including a recapitulation of our expenses because it indicates what can be done with a small amount of money (about \$225 per teacher for a year-long project) and, as I shall indicate later we could have omitted certain aspects of the project without seriously hampering its effectiveness.

<u>Consultants</u> (includes costs of the university consultant which were not covered by tuition and for speakers)	\$2,725.00
<u>Stipends for participants</u> (each teacher was paid \$60)	1,320.00
<u>Materials for participants</u> (each teacher received copies of the books listed in the resources section)	380.00

Memberships in NCTE (one for each building)

\$ 275.00

Dissemination Document

300.00
\$5,000.00

The time of the project director and language arts consultant, duplication, and typing were provided by the county office because of the benefits of this project to our schools.

How The Project Was Structured

The general format was established by the planning group. It was felt that meetings should be long enough to allow us to get deeply into a topic, should be regularly spaced throughout the year, and should be held after the dust from the day's activities had had a chance to settle.

This translated to once monthly from December to April with Saturday sessions in November and May. Meetings were held in the county office, a central location, from 6:30 - 9:30 in the evening. Dr. Davis and the evening's speaker usually met anyone from the group who was interested (and several were) for dinner preceeding the meeting.

Choosing a time is always a "pay your money and take your chance" decision. People were really worn out and ready to go by 9:30; and, the informal discussion with a speaker would have been better after the session. Several comments from the evaluation suggested meeting twice monthly for less time, but this did work and more, shorter meetings might not really be better.

After each session, meeting notes were prepared which summarized the speaker's main points, restated major discussion topics, identified the next meeting's topic, reading assignments, and what to bring. These were then sent to participants and other interested persons. The evaluation pointed out how important this process was for maintaining continuity for the project and getting everyone primed for the meeting.

Topics and Resource People

Identifying separate topics wasn't easy. We kept wanting to discuss them as we raised them and they were all so inter-related. We did manage to make a list and the planning team put together the following schedule of topics and presenters.

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Resource Persons</u>
The Writing Process: Prewriting Conferencing	Joy Ott, Utica High School James Britton (tape)
The Writing Process: Revision, Editing, Peer Conferencing and Evaluation	June Berkley, English Dept. Ohio University
Handling the Paperload Evaluation Techniques	Norma Nutter, Assoc. Dean College of Education, Ohio University

Developmental Writing Skills
Motivating Reluctant Writers

June Berkley, English Dept.
Ohio University

Sentence Combining
Expository vs. Creative Writing

David Bergdahl, English Dept.
Ohio University

Public Relations and the
English Teacher

John C. Maxwell, Executive
Director, N.C.T.E.

Project evaluations raised questions about whether we had done what we said we wanted to; and, although not all speakers addressed all topics, each area was addressed in some way by readings or discussions within the project.

What Resources Did We Use?

Each participant was provided with personal copies of the following books which were available from the National Council of Teachers of English:

- Classroom Practices in Teaching English, 1979-1980: How To Handle The Paper Load.
- Measure for Measure: A Guideline for Evaluating Students' Expository Writing, Norman C. Najimy, editor (1981).
- Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process, Carl Koch and James W. Brazil (1978).
- They Really Taught Us How To Write, Patricia Geuder, Linda Harvey, Dennis Loyd, and Jack Wages, editors (1974)

In addition, a number of excerpts and articles were made available for participants to read. These are listed in the bibliography at the end of this issue. Frank Smith's article, "Myths of Writing," (Language Arts, October 1981) served as a springboard for our initial discussions. There was lots to read; almost too much! We identified certain resources which would prime us before each session; and, although these were good resources which were easy to skip around in, a number of participants found this difficult to include in their schedules and are looking forward to summer for time to "look more carefully."

What Evaluation Processes Were Used and What Did The Evaluations Tell Us?

The project was evaluated by at least four means. First, teachers reported about student writing in their classes at the beginning and end of the project. These reports, when compared, indicated that:

1. There was a small increase in the amount of time spent discussing writing in class, hopefully due to an increased awareness of the writing process.
2. The amount of time spent by students, in class, writing showed a definite increase although the number of pages of student writing didn't increase greatly.

3. Major problems did not change, thus reinforcing the notion that they are persistent and not easily dealt with. Problems had to do with motivating students to write, getting them to do a good job, managing the volumes of papers, and knowing how to grade them appropriately.

A second evaluation tool was a questionnaire which participants completed during the first hour of the last session. Their in-depth responses have helped us gain additional insight into what happened in the project. Two special points are worthy of note.

These evaluations showed clearly that the most significant benefit of the project for participants was the opportunity to meet with others who had similar concerns to communicate, commiserate, share ideas, and solutions. Without detracting at all from the job our resource persons did, they were an expendable part of the project. We were always fighting the clock, torn between the need to hear from one speaker and the need to talk it out among ourselves; and, the evaluations say we needed more time to resolve some issues within the group.

Writing these articles for this issue of Focus was also a special area of comment on the evaluations. Despite the fact that being personally involved in the writing process was clearly identified as a major goal of the project from the very beginning, we had four people who really resented having to write these articles. These and several other strong reactions about how hard it was to do the article were made on deadline day. We think that at least part of the reaction reflects what many said, "Writing the article was scary and hard but an important part of the project. It made me feel that I'm a writer too!" Or, as someone once said, "I hate writing! I love having written!"

A third, and very important evaluation tool for us as planners was a short feedback form which participants completed following each session. We encouraged participants to talk to us using this device and we found that they did. We looked forward to reading the evaluations and were able to make adjustments based on what they told us; and, this encouraged them to tell us more.

The last, and perhaps most telling evaluations are what you're about to read -- the articles written by the participants which share their ideas, strategies, comments, reactions, successes, and failures as they seek better ways to teach writing.

Final Thoughts

I've attempted to outline the major components of our writing project with one aim in mind -- to convince you that planning and conducting such a project is within your reach. As we reflect back, we're convinced that the needs of English teachers to talk with each other about teaching writing are so great that as long as you build on these needs, your project will succeed. De-mystifying the writing process by writing to and for each other, being willing to share the frustration and the job of writing, writing about writing, these are all things that you can help a group to deal with yourself. And, the process isn't complete yet. I'm anxious to read this issue of Focus to see what we've said and I think all the other participants feel the same way.

Licking County Office of Education
Newark, Ohio

WRITING AS A HUMAN NEED: PLEASURE, NOT PUNISHMENT

by
June Berkley

"How do you get them to write?" Would-be composition instructors inquire again and again, as though teachers must compel composition in much the same spirit that our parents, knowing the discipline was "good for us" and the end product "something to be admired," compelled us each spring (depending on generation and geography) to beat endless dust out of ancient gray rugs or sucker an acre of smelly tomato vines—or de-louse the dogs.

"It can't be fun, but it must be done," my brother and I used to chant as we de-bugged a thousand potato plants, itching our way through a task we could tolerate only because it was temporary, knowing it would end and our father would praise our efforts—little rusty cans of gasoline afloat with hapless aphids from cleaned potato vines. And then we could go fishing.

So all too many teachers view writing—an odious task to be done, an odious accumulation to be graded or otherwise disposed of. An exercise in anguish but ever so good for the soul. And practical, "If you're going to college."

It is not my purpose here to negate the value of developing high-level writing skills in college-bound students, but rather to suggest that all students, at the heart of the matter, benefit most from classroom environments that nurture and evoke writing rather than impose it—implicitly and sometimes explicitly as punishment. Between those two extremes drift a vast number of classrooms in which writing is largely ignored or excused on various grounds as vague and yet as superficially convincing as "When would I grade it?" and "I'm stressing the basics first. They don't even know a noun from a verb." In general, classrooms ruled by these philosophies shelter a teacher who does not enjoy writing—probably because of his/her own school experience.

My experience, research and observation suggest that almost all students—until they are thwarted by meaningless or negative encounters with the writing process—want to write, in fact, need to write. Early on, too many students fall under the influence of teachers who equate mechanical correctness with goodness in writing (again, I do not eschew editing and correct form; the purpose here is to discuss the generation of papers worth editing) and conclude (by my observation, even before junior high years) that they "Can't write." When I press these students for more information about what they clearly see as their handicap, they almost invariably explain that they "spell poorly," "have poor grammar" or "can't punctuate." These problems usually do exist in these students, but they do not preclude good writing.

And they certainly can be corrected if the student writes something important enough to be edited. Our task as classroom leaders is to create situations in which writing is important, or to recognize those situations when they automatically arise.

Perhaps because I had the good fortune to be assigned very little writing as I made my way through the public school, perhaps because I was not distracted by other entertainments--but most likely because I grew up in a wealthy, rich verbal environment (those are not parallel adjectives) in which my initial, intermediate and eventually somewhat advanced writing was given notice and nurture, I have always viewed composition as something one gets to do, something both spontaneous and studied, a matter of mystery, a source of joy.

And a risky business. What if you stop reading this paragraph? (I have delayed composing this article for several weeks, concerned because I can never be sure that what I want to say on this paper will be worth my reader's interest, that I can say it cleverly and clearly and honestly). But let me, as Ferlengetti said, "risk absurdity." After all, my students do every time they write for class.

I have tried (during the hundred years since I left off potato bugs and fishing) to share the joy of writing with public high school and college students. Lately, as a writer-in-residence, I have also spent some wonder-filled hours with elementary students whose unspoiled composing powers reinforce my most horrifying conclusion about the way writing is mis-taught: By imposing rather than evoking and inviting composition, we maim and injure (but not beyond repair) our students' natural desire and inherent ability to use words to make some sense and order in the world, to create new worlds, and to come to terms with it all.

These needs and impulses are not reserved for the college bound. It is a human need to make sense of the universe, and if we will listen to our children's/our student's needs, we will find ourselves awash in a whole sea of composition topics that cry for expression. We will, that is, if we create a classroom environment that facilitates and evokes rather than bottles up, stymies and truncates thought and enthusiasm. The question is not "How to Get Them to Write" but how to build a classroom environment that evokes writing, works with their natural proclivities, and their everyday wonder, that leads them on to new levels of thought and feeling and achieves what Norman Cousins sees as the real purpose of education: the creation of a higher sense of the possible. Lofty as this aspiration may be, it is the guiding force in some fortunate classrooms.

An excited junior high teacher receives his students at the door. They have viewed the TV special "The Holocaust" (yes, they are young but they are only four years away from national voting rights and the draft; one will be pregnant within the year, one will die in his own fiery automobile, another is an orphan from Vietnam--do not shelter, nurture them) and they are spilling over with observations and questions. Many of them have no place else to process the information they have received (or mis-received). They know

Alan Stacy will hear them out, answer some questions, raise others, suggest where to find information, and--most importantly--provide time for them to explore by talking, reading and writing. They are not thinking about composition. They are thinking about the Holocaust. But they are thinking and someone is listening. Carefully. And with a purpose. Composition will come.

They will not explode for a while about the grisly details of the death camps, then "get back to the lesson." This is the lesson. They will not be asked to get quiet and get out their paper and write about autumn leaves or even about school reform or some other invented topic. They are being listened to and guided by a teacher who knows levels of thought, who will permit them to exorcise their horror, then move on to appropriate questions of history and morality and psychology and ethics. The teacher has done his homework. He offers books to be read: THE RESISTANCE OF THE WHITE ROSE, THEY FOUGHT BACK, THE ENDLESS STEPPE, SUMMER OF MY GERMAN SOLDIER, NIGHT (for those he knows to be mature enough to handle it) and for everyone, excerpts from THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK. He has an audio visual program on prejudice. He has a whole-class exercise which will explore perceptions about racism, bigotry and self.

Yes, he is treading on dangerous territory. Some of these students come from homes where the word Jew is still used in a derogatory sense. (Later the class will have to remind one another that the word Jap is offensive, not to be used in reference to a Japanese exchange student. "The war is over," one of them summed up.) In this classroom a teacher and, as a consequence, at least some of his students, believes with Jefferson that the purpose of public education is the elevation of an enlightened electorate. "Thinking people who can decide intelligently for themselves." In a classroom alive with debate and contradiction, reality and perceptions of reality, issues and the search for answers, there is the substance of composition. These students have things to say, questions to ask, information to process, arguments to be made.

The teacher wants them to interact with what they have seen, heard and read. He is particularly motivated by a question from one of the brightest students--a question that tells him, and eventually the whole class, much about the way we deal with horror: "None of this was real, was it?" she says that first hour, begging the adult world to negate the images, the ideas she has just seen. With the help of her teacher and her class she is able to understand something new about wish and reality, about her own/our own inclination to deny the horrible.

She and others in her class keep "an everyday journal" for a week--news of family life, accounts of food and dreams and feeling. They compare with Anne Frank's record in the Secret Annex. They speculate--on paper--what Anne's final journal entries might have been during those last days at Bergen-Belsen, what her life might have been like today, rushing in each morning to compare what they have written, assigning themselves a poem written from Anne's point of view, out her window.

A Holocaust survivor comes to class. They prepare questions--thoughtfully constructed inquiries. They listen and question and synthesize. They summarize and argue and speculate. They edit and revise and edit again. They send their summary to other classes, to the school paper. Yes, they write a thank-you letter, but no ordinary, cursory or empty expression of forced gratitude. They feel their own compulsion to write; they suggest, so an assignment is not necessary. This is a culminating project but the subject will not be dismissed. They will return to this subject throughout the year (and hopefully throughout their lives); next year's journal entries will continue to recall this study/experience, this subject. Later, a senior paper on the life of Elie Wiesel will draw on this unit and the student will return to show his junior high teacher what he has thought/written.

In this vignette I have tried to show by illustration and example (as chapter 3 of the Advanced Composition text instructs our students to do--wisely, but lifelessly if the classroom is sterile or timid or repressive) that we cannot deal narrowly with the question of getting them to write. We must create a classroom environment, "a community of language," as Stephen Judy calls it in his text THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S HANDBOOK. In this space, where a teacher genuinely enters into the concerns and lives of his students, hears their questions and permits their responses, reads with interest what they have written, writes back to them (marginal notes about substance, not just mechanics--and appended pages of response to what they have said) and publishes what they have prepared for public viewing (mimeographed booklets and professionally printed reviews, as well as a notebook of classroom classics), students see writing as an automatic component of learning. ("After everyone has written about their own experiences with prejudice, we'll know whether we want to debate or not," one wise old seventh grader remarked.)

If more teachers would stop ignoring what research shows us about generating writing, if those teachers who have been maimed by their own school experience and suffer themselves a morbid dread of writing can cast off the safety and sterility of artificial assignments and move into environments where students confront ideas and reach for language, for ways of confronting the essential elements of our lives and shaping their thoughts and sharing them, then we will cease to ask how to get a "required" composition, how we can wring some words out of a reluctant spirit.

In this quest for self expression (and most early writing should be personal and self-centered; there is time for formal argumentation at the upper levels and students who have written widely and with satisfaction about personal matters will move happily into more abstract topics) we need not always grapple with matters as weighty as the Holocaust. A moment of supreme joy and achievement came to me once in the most "remedial" of "remedial classes." We were following a kind of programmed text (there's no harm in that if you use a lot of talk and human interaction with it) and had come upon a structured assignment that called for a five-paragraph paper using examples and illustrations. (I found, in fact, that this restless collection of individuals who had been delivered unto me with a wry grin and an administrative challenge to "See what you can do with these!" operated best with some visible structure before them. Much of what we must do is un-do. No one in the class had, when he came into the course, any use whatsoever for composition--as it had been experienced.)

So with much talk and frequent reading aloud (by me and sometimes by them--I looked hard for well written pieces on motorcycles and pearl diving and country-western/rock to intersperse with "the words of our sponsor"), we worked our way forward. I spent what I felt by environmental conditioning to be "more time than I should have" on getting to know them, to listening to their lives, and to building bridges toward the intriguing spirits that masked behind teen-age bravado. But they began to write. Especially after I confessed my own errant youth: expelled from English once--for reading a magazine during a diagramming lesson--they agreed to deal with some of their own scrapes with authority for an in-house publication. We were able to move on from confessionals, but not before I felt my moment, knew for an instant that I had been a teacher.

This unforgettable moment came as a gift from Rick and Steve, and Karl, who had been disarmed from the outset by my suggestion that they sit together so they could critique one another's papers, since they were inclined to the same topics and "got on" so well together. ("They always separate us," Steve volunteered on day one. "We make trouble together." Something to write about, I thought. "We'll be busy," I said. "Sit where you like." They watched me with strange expressions the remainder of the period.)

Early in the fifth week after he had written, Steve sat despondently, unable he said even to "jumble," a process of spilling out things of interest that might be the beginning of a paper. He made, instead, violent ball-point pen scrapes across his tablet. "Lost my job," he explained when I sat beside him. (I like to leave empty chairs about the classroom when possible so I can sit down beside students on their territory rather than call them "to the desk." Little matters of classroom practice like this are much more important than, say, "the ordering of rhetorical modes" when it comes to evoking good composition.) We talked for a while and some of the others stopped to listen. Others continued to write. There was some agreement that his dismissal was not unwarranted. (He jumbled three principal reasons--late to work, broke an engine, and accidentally stuck a pitchfork through the boss's toe--"Man, that would do it," Rick agreed, and suggested the order of the paragraphs.)

Writing is not behavioral therapy alone, but it was with some satisfaction that I noted his opening sentence: "I got myself in a real bind when I lost my job on Pete Hendershot's tomato farm." He proceeded to delineate his offenses; and he and Ella, the only girl in class agreed that it would not be irrelevant (they used that word now) to bring in the fact that he'd be unable to make his car payments.

I was in the opposite end of the room exercising my peripheral vision (an important ability to develop) and listening to the room in general when I heard Rick, page two of Steve's manuscript in hand, proclaim in low but definite tones, "It's all good, Man, all the way through, but here in the paragraph about the pitchfork, YOU NEED MORE DETAIL."

Steve sat for a little while, thinking; then he began to write again, and I stood there wanting to share with someone this little victory of re-directed human energy, this slight refinement of intellect, this explosive moment. The bell rang and Karl leaned up the aisle toward Steve, "Hey,

lemme read that, will you, on the way to gym?"

I will not, as my advanced composition class would say, belabor the point; but that five weeks' growth for Steve and Rick and Ella and Karl and all that wonderful collection, continued and was as important to them and to me as the different kinds of growth in my pre-college classes.

Most of the principles of building a language community and offering positive feed-back and re-inforcement that apply to Steve's group apply to "upper level" students as well. Writing flourishes where thinking flourishes and thinking (as well as feeling) comes into our classrooms every day, not always asking for written expression but, more often than not, lying open before us if we will enter there.

Some General Suggestions

During the past century, I have looked seriously at the way writing is taught and mis-taught (and I have committed all the sins of pedagogy listed herein; the next century will be devoted to expiation), so I offer these observations, hoping they may help reinforce or modify what happens to students in classrooms, what students are enabled and encouraged to make happen in classrooms.

1. A wise little student once said to his teacher, "You make me feel more important than the subject. I've never felt that way in school before." This student had "succeeded" academically but he had been missing a kind of affirmation that is all too rare. Consider what happens to students who receive neither academic nor personal affirmation. Students must trust the environment and feel important in it. Writing is the most personal of academic efforts; it involves the whole person.
2. Janet Burroway speaks to this matter in her book WRITING FICTION (Little Brown, and Co., 1982) "Your personality and character are not under scrutiny; your writing is." As personal as writing is, students must be helped to understand that an awkward sentence or an unattractive phrase is not a final statement about them as a human being. We must learn to be critical of one another's work without feeling threatened or rejected. To understand this, offer a few pages of your own composition to students and invite their criticism. Do or do not tell them who wrote the paper, depending on your situation. Notice how it feels when they delete, mark over, x out and write Awkward on your sentences. Notice too how great it is when they say specifically why they like something.
3. Follow your own advice: if you ask students to eschew the trite, the mundane, the pompous, the vague, and the vain (as well you might), practice what you preach when you respond to their writing. Let your own marginal notes and end remarks be witty, concise, succinct, clever, incisive, specific,

and well-reasoned. How many thousands of papers have gone back to students with a "very good," a check mark, or a C—the only indication that another human mind has been there.

4. Some teachers have good results when they refuse to give a letter grade but give rather detailed advice and feed-back on initial papers. Students will look for the simple letter grade, but, failing to find it, direct their attention to the remarks—which many writing teachers feel would be obscured by the standard reaction: A = Oh, I'm good. No need to worry; B = Pretty good for me; C = I'm average and so on. If you think students will not tolerate the absence of the time-honored code, take heart. An instructor I knew recently taught two standard college courses in composition in which no letter grades of any kind were given or asked for during the entire quarter. Instead, detailed commentary was offered on six different papers and students wrote in their evaluations that they felt that their energies were re-directed by the absence of grades. Most made A's and B's. "Not knowing made me anxious," one student commented, "but I knew I was worrying about the wrong thing. I knew from the comments that I was getting credit for my work and I knew I was improving. A C at the beginning would have discouraged me badly."

5. Consider the importance, particularly for younger students, of having a significant adult speak to youngsters every day. (Notice in the first vignette above that the teacher made a practice of greeting each student as he or she came into the classroom.) He also set aside all mechanical details of class and attended to "leave taking" as each person went away from the class. Students who are treated significantly behave as though they are significant. One ex-student told her teacher, "When I came to school some days the only reason was that I knew you'd have something to say to me. Your talking to me was often the only conversation I had all day." This student, who measured superior ability in language and average ability in mathematics, earned only mediocre marks in language arts and honors achievement in mathematics—where the significant adult affirmed her existence every day. The application here is that although students do not write just for teachers, they do some of their writing with the instructor in mind. A real relationship between teacher and student is likely to evoke considerably more effort than a sterile, unperson treatment will produce.

6. The subject of the English classroom is language and what we do with it. To treat the whole phenomenon of language as though it belongs to someone else—poets, novelists, journalists, essayists, politicians, media people—is to undercut the whole education process. Language belongs to those who command it. Live playfully and happily with the miracle of language. Treat it seriously by marveling at its lack of logic, its idiosyncratic patterns, its elusive and ultimately unfathomable

nature. We have only words to freeze reality on the page, so cultivate above all a love for words, a sense of wonder and joy about this most important of all human inventions. "She is alive and well and carrying on her love affair with the English language," devoted students once remarked of their retired English teacher. Her infatuation with language was contagious; those who lived in her classroom are indelibly marked--few will ever take words for granted.

7. The kind of atmosphere that evokes pleasurable writing is evident in Ruth Friendly's Scarsdale, N.Y. fifth-grade classroom where they enjoy activities such as re-writing "Little Red Riding Hood" from the viewpoint of the wolf. One of her students was recently "published" at a national symposium on censorship in Atlanta, Georgia. The wolf's eloquent statement of his case helped set the tone for a debate on textbook selection--organized by Fred Friendly.

8. Elliot Wigginton, founder of the Foxfire series out of Rabun Gap, Georgia, recently recounted for a national meeting of secondary school English teachers in Minneapolis, how a class of high school sophomores previously labeled "illiterate" and "hopeless"--unfit to publish even a school newspaper--produced Doubleday's all-time best seller FOXFIRE I. The secret--not simple, but probably best explained as evocation, invitation, and involvement.

9. There are no overnight miracles in improving usage. Small gains will come if the classroom environment evokes interest in the difference between local and standard forms. A huge bulletin board alongside the classroom seating area served as a place to write in tall letters many of the "offending" forms: "He done..." "I seen..." "...to Joe and I." Superimposed in an alternate color on the colloquial word, we wrote the standard written form. As a settler before class began we usually went through these, noting clearly each time the difference between what we usually hear and the standard written form. Students were always eager to add to the collection of "questionable and irregular" as we labeled it. This attitude of inquisitiveness and observation about the language worked more to change written patterns (the offending forms were always there as a check list when students edited papers) than any amount of worksheets and hand-slapping.

10. The importance of constant attention to language in both oral and written forms is stated succinctly by Roger Garrison, who worked in the early '70's in the Westbrook College, Portland, Maine, writing institute: "So the problem in teaching writing is to find ways to keep students writing nearly all the time, and to provide methods for constant and almost immediate feedback for each student as he wrestles with problems of expression. Further, students need to learn how to diagnose their own writing difficulties, and how to resolve them with less and less dependence on the instructor. Indeed, it is the primary

job of a teacher of writing to do himself out of a job as quickly and as efficiently as he can."

11. Jerry S. taught me an important lesson when I was a very young teacher, intent on correct papers. He dashed by during change of classes with a page of prose. "Will you read this?" he panted, one eye on the biology door. I drew out my marking pencil and poised it over the page as I began to read. "No!" Jerry breathed, hovering over his new creation. "I don't want you to mark it up. I want to know what you think." I have tried since to read each paper once without my pencil in hand and to tell students first--often on an attached sheet--what I think about what they've said. Then (often in another color--a code they understand) I suggest revisions and help with editing.

12. I just read (then edited) a first submission from a college freshman. It contained fifteen errors in mechanics and spelling on the first page.* I will be interested to know his writing history. He thinks he wants to be a writer. It would seem that up to this point neither he nor his teachers have cared much about what he has written--or he would be able to edit. Early on, students must be made aware that mechanical problems negate even brilliant messages; but they should not confuse the two processes of composing and editing. One good way to emphasize this difference is to show students a piece of lifeless prose--perfectly spelled, punctuated and edited (free from even the slightest possibility of usage error). They will find it boring and dull, of course. Give the paper an F because it doesn't say anything. Give it an A for correctness. The drama of this little scene is very effective.

13. *How much marking should the teacher do on a paper like the one described above? I will mark the first page--or most of it--closely. I will indicate in writing the seriousness of his problem and re-assure him that at his age and intellectual level he can quickly learn these details of the art. He will edit the remaining pages and re-submit. He will likely be upset for a while because I will not accept repetition of errors that I have marked. (That's why it isn't practical to red-pencil every page; most of the errors will be the same kind of omission or misconception over and over again.) He will be encouraged to bring his questions and his handbook to conference as often as necessary. I will answer any question he has before he hands his papers in. But he will know that serious mechanical errors will have a serious effect on his final mark in the course. Profound improvement will be reflected in a profound upswing in his grades. But we will not dwell on the grade (in fact, no letter grades will be given in this creative writing course until the portfolio is revised for the final mark); we will, instead, deal specifically with his "correctness" until it takes its rightful place, quite subordinate to the "goodness" of his paper.

14. After years of writing papers and grading papers for college classes, I came to a startling but obvious conclusion: in spite of our efforts to be positive (and most things about most papers will be right and good), we as students submit our papers under a thought cloud that reads something like this: "I wonder what he/she will find amiss? I wonder what's wrong with it?" This cloud floats over the student's head because, as teachers, too many of us pick up that paper and start to read it, wondering, "Let's see what needs marked here. Where does the paper fall short?" Would it not be wiser, more helpful to ask instead, "What has been achieved here?" and to answer that question first? Writing is a complex operation; it flourishes best with positive reinforcement from readers who care. It takes time and much effort to be a caring reader of students' papers, but if that is not the business of an English teacher, what is?

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PREWRITING POSSIBILITIES

by
Judy Haney

It would seem that everyone would agree that writing is a scary prospect. A blank sheet of paper can be as monumental as a mountain waiting to be climbed. When your only gear is a pencil, pen or typewriter, and paper, the task seems insurmountable. With this in mind, is it so difficult to understand why students in a classroom wince when the teacher mentions writing?

My primary experience has been with middle school students--seventh graders to be precise. These students have a desire to express themselves and to have that self-expression accepted by both their peers and the adults they deem important. But even these students find writing assignments frightening and ominous.

It is with this idea in mind that I now attempt to share with you prewriting. It is hoped that through the practice of prewriting some of the frustrations and fears can be lessened.

Carl Koch and James M. Brazil in STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE COMPOSITION PROCESS write, "Before we ever put pen to paper to write, we go through a process which, for lack of a better term, is called prewriting." They also tell us, "The waters of this prewriting domain remain murky because the domain is inside the individual writer's head."

Considering both of these statements, it would seem that we need to initiate activities that will help the thought processes being utilized. It would seem logical that if the activities were designed to make the student search his/her mind these "murky waters" would become clearer to the writer at least if not to the instructor.

I would like to share three prewriting activities with you. I used all of these in my own classroom.

ACTIVITY ONE - This activity was designed to incorporate as many of the writer's five senses as possible.

MATERIALS - Color pictures of outdoor scenes (I used pictures from "Ideal"), paper, and pencil.

PROCEDURE - Each student was asked to select the picture that he/she liked most. After looking at his/her picture for a few minutes, I asked them to imagine that they were there in the picture. With their eyes closed, they were asked to "feel" all of the things around them. After a few minutes, they wrote "feeling" words and/or phrases.

Next, with eyes closed, they were asked to "smell" what they could. Again they were asked to write these words or phrases.

We went through the five senses one at a time following the procedure discussed above.

ACTIVITY TWO - This activity was designed to help the writer describe the feelings and/or opinions of something inanimate. This activity helped to enhance their imagination.

MATERIALS - Paper and pencil.

PROCEDURE - The students were asked to pretend that they were an inanimate object. We began by discussing a few. Below is an example of the discussion that went on between the students and teacher.

TEACHER: What do you think it would be like to be a cloud?
How would you feel just floating around in the air?

(At this point, student response was limited to giggles. They had never thought of this before.)

TEACHER: How would you feel if you were all fluffy and white and suddenly you turned dark?

STUDENTS: Mad - afraid!

TEACHER: Now! what if it felt as if you were being squeezed and squeezed and squeezed?

STUDENTS: It would hurt!

TEACHER: What would you do?

STUDENTS: I'd get mad and throw lightning bolts all around.
I'd cry and rain all over everything and everyone.

TEACHER: Good! Now think of some inanimate objects of your own.

Here we listed the objects on the board. Students were told they could choose one of those listed or pick one of their own.

Next, I had them imagine themselves as the object they chose. They were to list words, sentences, etc. that expressed feelings. From there they wrote about "themselves." Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be a telephone wire, a mailbox, a baseball bat, a road, or a rock? After reading some of the students' compositions, I looked at these objects with different respect.

ACTIVITY THREE - This activity was designed to help students think in terms of their audience.

MATERIALS - A variety of children's books, paper, and pencils.

PROCEDURE - We began by discussing the different ways we write based on who will be reading the finished work. Next I read several of the children's books to them. I used such books as Jack and the Beanstalk, Chicken Licken, etc. However, any children's books will do. I tried a variety of levels as the students were going to choose their own audience.

After reading these books, we discussed words, sentence length, sentence patterns, etc. Each student was then told to decide on his/her audience, choose a topic, and begin.

I have described three activities that could be used as prewriting activities. However, none of these means anything if the results to the activities do not bear out the idea that they will help clear up the "murky waters" in the students' minds.

All of these activities were what I would term successful. At first the students felt funny when I asked them to close their eyes, but after the first time they relaxed and really enjoyed the activity. Their final pieces of writing were excellent for the first of the year.

Colorful words such as cascaded, trickled, and babbled were used to describe rivers and streams. Many of the compositions were so vivid I could pick out the picture from the words.

Activity two brought giggles and snickers when I first began talking like I was a cloud, a street, a mailbox, etc. But even this activity became a challenge to the students as they too became inanimate objects. I think the best writing on this activity was that of one girl that described a football's feelings when it was under a pile of football players.

"Everyone was cheering and clapping for the players. But no one stopped to think about how I felt. After all, I was the one on the bottom of the pile. I was the one that was getting mashed into the ground."

By the time Activity Three was introduced, the students just accepted what we were doing. They listened intently to the reading of the books and even spent several minutes going through them on their own.

Apart from the writing itself, the students seemed more relaxed. I didn't spend nearly as much time with confused students as I had in past years. This, to me, is an important result because better, uninhibited writing comes from a relaxed writer.

The best way to give results is to share a writing with you. I have chosen one that was done after Activity Three. It was written by Angie Lott, a seventh grade student at Watkins Middle School.

BERNARD'S BALLOON

One morning Bernard found a balloon and began to blow and blow. He kept blowing and it got bigger and bigger.

"Stop blowing," said his sister. "You're knocking over my dolls." But he kept on blowing.

"Stop blowing," said his mother. "You knocked the clock in the fish tank." But he just kept on blowing.

"Stop blowing, Bernard, you're smashing your grandmother," shouted his father. But he kept blowing. He decided to go outside, but he kept blowing.

Bernard walked to a field with cows and knocked them all over. But he was still blowing.

He came to an open field, and then a gust of wind came and carried Bernard and the balloon away.

Bernard was very scared. He held on tightly to the balloon. Bernard went through skyscrapers. People on the twenty-ninth floor stopped to look as he sailed by.

But just when he was having fun the wind died down. It let him down near his house. Everyone came running over to see Bernard and the gigantic balloon. Then quickly he let the balloon go. It went W W W h h h h e e e e e ! That was the end of the gigantic balloon.

Annie chose her audience, a six-year-old, and then she started writing. She experienced only minor frustrations that were helped through short conferences. Prior to the prewriting activities, the frustrations were more and greater.

In closing, I simply repeat that prewriting is one possible solution to the fears and frustrations that writers experience when faced with the task of writing. I do not pretend to say that it will solve all writing problems, but I do believe it will help.

There are many prewriting activities that could be used. I have given you only a few. I hope these and the thoughts I have shared will give you some ideas on handling your writing problems.

Watkins Middle School
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LIGHTENING THE PAPER LOAD

by
NORMA NUTTER

The paper load is one of the most persistent problems of teaching English/language arts. Too many students generate too many words, and so teachers become trapped between the need to provide quick, effective feedback to their developing writers and all the other demands of their professional and personal lives. Quite possibly, the low incidence of writing in schools is attributable to the fact that teaching writing becomes punishing to teachers and, therefore, becomes something to be avoided. A beginning point for solving the problem of paper load is the fact that, often, English/language arts teachers tend to rely on a narrow range of methods that produce an excess of papers to be read and often they rely on evaluation methods that yield a low return of students' learning for the amount of teacher's labor invested. In other words, some of the punishment may be self-inflicted and unnecessary.

By What Standard May We Judge Methods For Lightening The Paper Load As Acceptable For Teaching Writing?

Obviously, not all strategies for reducing the amount of paper a composition teacher takes home will also promote students' development of writing skills. For example, one highly effective method for reducing paper load is to remove the rubber band from a set of papers (we teachers are thrifty people) and drop them in the trash can.* A defensible context for evaluating strategies as either acceptable or unacceptable may be derived from the fact that the development of writing skills is actually the development of a number of subskills which may be categorized generally as "fluency" in writing and "skill" in writing (Table 1). Although the subskills of writing are not truly separable, it is not necessary that all aspects of the writing process be attended to at all times. An acceptable method should promote either fluency or skill.

Approach #1: Not Grading All Student Writing

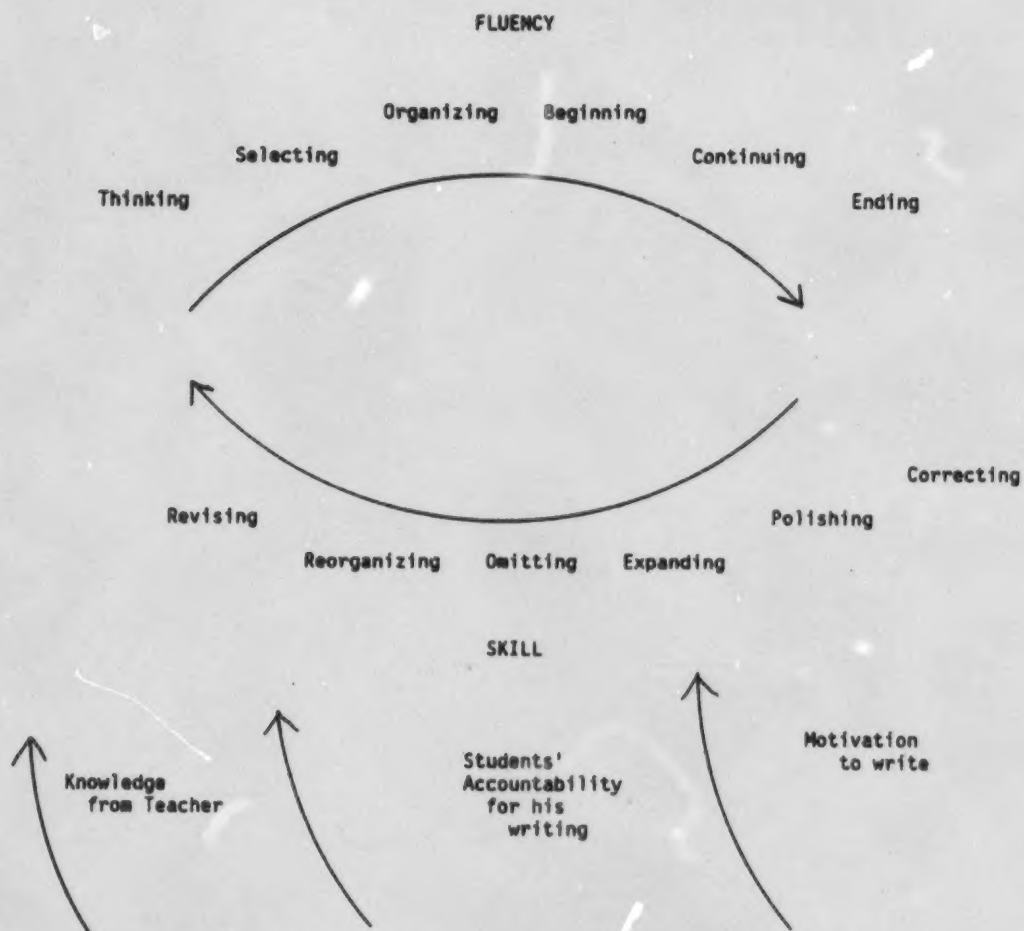
Most fledgling writers need to develop fluency; and for them, simply writing, simply practicing the process of writing, is beneficial. However, for teachers to cast their eyes and red pens over every word is not necessary.

*This particular method is most frequently practiced by teachers who have gotten behind with their paper load and find papers so old that returning them would be embarrassing.

Table 1

CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL METHOD
OF TEACHING COMPOSITION

PROMOTES FLUENCY AND SKILL IN WRITING



The trashcan method described above does require students to write, but it poses definite problems of long-range accountability, both in the negative sense of accountability (very few students will continue to do schoolwork if they know there will be no consequences for their efforts) and in the positive sense (both students and teachers must push learning along). For students who are strongly oriented to rewards and punishments, two methods can keep the writing flowing while relieving the teacher of much useless crawling up and down margins:

1. Establish a random pattern of selecting writing to be reviewed and evaluated in detail. As students become used to the idea of writing for themselves, the interval between the closely evaluated compositions can be increased.
2. Inspect ungraded work and record whether it was done. A set of compositions can be scanned very quickly for general appropriateness, length, etc.
3. Let students review their own work and select the best from several papers to be evaluated in detail and graded.
4. File papers rather than discarding or permitting students to discard them. This practice produces a record of students' progress and a store of material to use later for peer editing, revision, or publication. For example, an instructive exercise is to have students who have matured as writers reread and revise some of their earlier writing.

Approach #2: Use Short Writings

English/language arts teachers tend to push for length in students' writing and rarely suggest changes that result in shortening a piece of writing. This emphasis on length probably results from the fact that, for many of our students, the most common problems are vagueness, lack of specific detail, unsupported generalizations and abstractions, and incompletely developed or poorly communicated ideas. However, a number of skills--fineness of expression, diction, usage and punctuation, clarity, and economy--can be taught through short writings. An additional advantage of short writings is that students can focus on the precision of their writing and are not as likely to become lost and frustrated as when handling large masses of information.

1. Use forced timed writings. These brief writings, generated under pressure, then become the material for revision and refinement.
2. Set page limits which direct students' attention to focusing and organizing their thoughts. A particularly good exercise is to require a brief paper and then a series of increasingly more limited summaries of that paper.
3. Spend time on generating and refining writings that range from one or two sentences to a paragraph to a page in length. Again, precision can be taught and, perhaps, is best taught through shorter writings.

4. Treat the short answer test item as a suitable object of study in the composition class. By selective attention, we often communicate to our students that prosaic or utilitarian writing need not be done well.

Approach #3: The Revision Cycle

The revision cycle is simply recycling one paper over several weeks for successive revisions. The teacher becomes increasingly familiar with both the content and the weaknesses of each paper and can focus on helping the student correct the weaknesses.

1. Read each draft for only one or two aspects and develop a sequence to direct your attention. For example, read the first draft to evaluate only the overall focus and direction of the students' thoughts. Read the second draft only for organization, and so forth.

2. Have the students submit the previous draft with each new revision. Quickly review your comments on the previous draft.

Teachers typically will encounter two problems with revision cycles. The first is that students initially resist revising. Often, they will make only minor changes and recopy the paper. During the revision cycle, revising itself must be taught. Second, some students will need more drafts than others; and some will select topics or approaches that dead end. Especially toward the end of the revision cycle, instruction must become increasingly individualized.

Approach #4: Reduce The Time Spent Marking Usage And Mechanics

Close attention to marking problems in usage and mechanics is actually counterproductive. Aside from the psychological consequences of having their writing returned covered with red marks, students may receive too much feedback and too limited feedback for any effective learning. A more sensible approach, commonly called "functional grammar," focuses both teacher's and students' energies on a limited number of problems.

1. Take a sample of the student's writing. Several pages will do.
2. Read for the most serious problems in usage and/or mechanics.
3. Identify from two to four of the most serious problems for each writer and make a record for yourself. (See Pooley, 1974 for a framework for evaluating the relative importance of various problems in usage.)
4. Teach the student the correct form (even better if you can identify an item to teach the whole class or a group) until the student can supply the rule, supply correct examples, and correct incorrect examples.
5. From then on, read the student's paper only for his or her targeted errors. If the paper is "error free," give a good grade for usage and mechanics.

Miscellaneous Approaches

1. During in-class writing, participate in the writing and serve as a resource for students' questions about spelling, punctuation, organization, etc. Do much of your teaching of writing while students write. There is no reason all your knowledge has to be shared after the fact of writing.
2. At least occasionally, have students work on a uniform topic. Comparisons of style, organization, etc. are easier for you to make and are also instructive to share with your students.
3. Conduct positive, constructive critiques in class, including reading papers to the class, peer editing, and self-critiquing. Be sure to hold peer editors accountable for the quality of their editing; and, if you detect variations in the quality of peer editing, try round-robin editing or group editing. In a supportive atmosphere, these more public approaches to evaluating and revising compositions themselves become valuable instruction in writing and promote the idea that writing is more than the art of persuading a sleepy teacher to give a good grade.
4. Encourage and require students to write formal critiques of their own papers. For example, ask students to hand in an analysis of the best section, worst section, or most serious problems of their paper. Then, respond to both the paper and the student's critique.
5. If you require students to keep a journal, exploit the full potential of the journal to keep students writing and revising without your having to slog through every word.

There Is No Magic Way To Make All Paper Grading Vanish

An English/language arts teacher who does no more paper reading and marking than, say, a mathematics teacher is not teaching students to write. Period. But an English/language arts teacher who pores over stacks and stacks of formal compositions and who marks every "sp," "awk," and "frag" is engaging in some totally unnecessary self-mortification. Hopefully, this list of approaches may make us more aware of the variety of ways to prod and entice our students forward in writing, not all of which require us to suffer.

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POTPOURRI OF NEW IDEAS

by
KATHY R. STROHL

I needed to introduce new ideas into my eighth grade English classes to initiate enthusiasm and enjoyment in writing. Because of the paper load and numerous errors found in collected writing assignments, I often avoided having my students write altogether - to the detriment of their development. They needed to write to get better at it.

The Licking County Writing Project gave me several ideas I was eager to try. They focused on the following areas of concern:

- A) Reducing the paper load
- B) Conferencing
- C) Pre-writing
- D) Development of vocabulary

Experimenting in each of the four areas, I tried some new activities with my students and evaluated the results. As a consequence, I no longer "shun" writing, and I feel most of the students, regardless of their ability, look forward to writing assignments more than before. Each of these four areas will be discussed separately to explain the procedures I followed.

A) Reducing the paper load

Having 180 students created an appalling paper load for me. Normally, I have required each of my students to write a short story after reading some short stories and discussing such elements as plot, theme, character, setting, and climax.

Based on ideas in They Really Taught Us How to Write (NCTE: 1974) and How to Handle the Paper Load (NCTE: 1979), I set up my short story assignment as a group project. Groups consisted of 3-5 students. This cut the number of stories I had to grade from 180 to about 36, an average of six from each of my six classes. Story ideas were provided by having students select a plot, setting, theme, and climax card from a random group of ten cards for each element. TABLE #1 on page 2 lists the cards for each element that could be randomly selected.

Groups had to complete certain requirements to assure me they were working and sharing the writing responsibilities. Work had to

TABLE # 1 SHORT STORY CARDS

26

PLOT CARDS	SETTING CARDS	THEME CARDS	CLIMAX CARDS
Return after a long absence	space ship	amazing coincidences of life	A damaging letter is found.
Rivalry between professionals	school field trip	Faith will sustain you.	Person runs away, dies, or disappears.
An economic boom or depression	prison	Person can challenge the "establishment."	Person admits that they've been living a lie.
Being lost, alone, or helpless	hospital	Chance or fate can undo all one's plans.	Person makes a momentous decision.
Personal and/or professional boredom	sports event	War and/or poverty can be tragic.	A long-kept secret is abruptly revealed.
Romance and/or marriage	business meeting	Man/woman is torn by conflicting impulses within,	A person realizes he/she has ruined people's lives.
Disagreement with a government policy or social custom	apartment or tenement	A person is basically good.	A good deed is begun or thwarted.
Physical or mental illness	deserted beach house	Person must face the forces of nature.	A person realizes he/she has been betrayed.
Feud between family or friends	government office	Personal honor above all.	Actions have the opposite effect of what the doer intended.
Military occupation of a country	carnival	Man/woman is basically evil.	Murder, theft, fire, battle, or natural disaster takes place.

handed in to me each day as I required, and strict adherence to the following schedule allowed the students one week to complete the assignment:

- DAY 1 - Hand in the names of group members with a chairman designated.
 - Provide me with a list of the 4 cards chosen by the group chairman.
 - Provide me with a list of responsibilities to be handled by each group member.
- DAY 2 - Make sure each student has a copy of the 4 cards chosen so that work may continue despite any absenteeism by a group member.
 - Turn in a list of 10 events that will occur in the story from beginning to end; make sure one of the 10 events covers the climax card that was chosen.
 - Begin rough draft.
- DAY 3 - Finish rough draft; double-check rules governing quotation marks and correct indentations; complete rough draft so it is ready for proofreading for the next class session.
- DAY 4 - Proofread story as a group.
 - Trade with another group and have them proofread.
 - Revise where necessary; design cover and title page as specified.
- DAY 5 - Have one group member as designated present a 2-3 minute summary of the story to the entire class; hand in the story to be graded.

Short stories were quite good and required very little correcting on my part, since proofreading had been a constant consideration throughout the writing process. Making this a group project succeeded in cutting my paper load tremendously.

B) Conferencing

A requirement of my advanced class is to submit an essay in the local Daughters of the American Revolution contest. The contest always occurs in the fall of the school year, and my students usually have had very little research writing experience prior to this assignment. Consequently, mistakes abound. I tried conferencing and a new proofreading technique to help minimize the paper load and save time going over errors.

To reduce organization problems, I required a content outline from each student. I conferenced with each student as to the appropriateness of the topic, its intended scope, and the thoroughness of the outline. It was easy to check all 26 outlines in one 40-minute class period. Classes were held in the school library, so as each student's outline was approved, the student could then begin his research and note-taking.

Since the contest rules specified that the paper was to be complete with footnotes and bibliography, I allowed the students 10 days to complete their rough draft. TABLE # 2 on page 5 indicates the proofreading checklist provided to allow students to proofread as they wrote. The day before the rough draft was due me, each student used the same checklist to proofread someone else's paper. When I collected the rough drafts the next day, I conferenced with each student 2-3 minutes on research style, i.e., correctly numbered footnotes, alphabetized bibliography, correct spacing and margins. Reading the essays went extremely fast, since students had proofread with excellent accuracy and some of the errors I had caught during their 10 days preparation and discussed these re-occurring errors with the class as a whole. As soon as I had conferenced with each student, he was instructed to begin his final draft; consequently, each student was continually kept occupied, and discipline was no problem for me at all. Conferencing had proved itself quite successful for this particular assignment, and the checklist had also reinforced paper load innovations.

C) Pre-writing

The article, "Richard Cory: Writing to an Audience," in Koch's book, Strategies for Teaching the Composition Process, initiated me to try several pre-writing activities with my 8th graders. June Berkley, a professor from Ohio University had also stressed the importance of several short writing activities as opposed to a few lengthy ones.

Applying the Richard Cory idea to the poem, "The Highwayman," my students were asked to do one of the following:

- 1) Write an obituary for the Highwayman.
- 2) Write a letter that Tim, the ostler, might have written to Bess.
- 3) In a poem, give the landlord's reaction to the events that occurred.
- 4) Write a telegram that Bess might have sent to the Highwayman had she been able to warn him.

Some examples of student work follow:

RESEARCH PAPER CHECKLIST - TABLE # 2

- _____ 1. Need an attractive folder or cover.
- _____ 2. Page 1 should begin $\frac{1}{2}$ way down the page.
- _____ 3. Page 1 should not be numbered.
- _____ 4. Footnotes are incorrectly numbered.
- _____ 5. Footnote style is incorrect. Check your yellow book.
- _____ 6. Paper should be double-spaced.
- _____ 7. Paragraph is needed when you see this mark: "¶"
- _____ 8. Bibliography is not indented properly.
- _____ 9. Bibliography is not in alphabetical order.
- _____ 10. Underline all books and magazines.
- _____ 11. Single space your footnotes and bibliography entries.
- _____ 12. Single space all quotes that go beyond 3 written lines and indent twice as far as the normal paragraph.
- _____ 13. Paper is incoherent; information not in a logical order.
- _____ 14. Paper needs a strong conclusion.
- _____ 15. Content is excellent; paper is well-organized.
- _____ 16. Paper shows time well-spent.
- _____ 17. Watch careless spelling errors!
- _____ 18. Prepare final draft in blue or black ink.
- _____ 19. Excellent title - shows creativity.
- _____ 20. Good use of illustrations.
- _____ 21. Put total number of words at the end of your final copy.
- _____ 22. Watch sentence fragments!
- _____ 23. Double-check comma rules.
- _____ 24. End all footnotes and bibliography entries with a period.
- _____ 25. Margins even.

OBITUARIES

JOHN J. TURPIN

John J. Turpin died January 16, 1787. He was killed after doing battle with the King's men. Mr. Turpin will be buried in the Nottingham grave yard in England.

--by Thomas Chester
8C

TELEGRAM!

NOTE: King's men are here. Beware! Tied up with musket at side. Do not come by moonlight.
Love,
Bess

--by Tina Ogawa
8A

LETTER

To My Dearest Bess,

I hope in the years to come you will understand and forgive what I have done. Several hours ago, I heard the Highwayman come on his horse (from who knows where) and visit. I am sure that you understand that I was filled with anger, hurt, and most of all jealousy. So it was then I decided to inform the Excellency's army of this Highwayman.

In closing Bess, I hope you understand that I did this for your own welfare because my feelings for you are more than just friendship.

In sincere love,
Tim

--by Jodi Finch
8A

HIGHWAYMAN

Services for the Highwayman, 35, 1481 Dead Beat Rd., will be at 3 P.M. Thursday in the chapel of the Wolfe Man Funeral Home, with Reverend Dracula officiating. Burial will be at Dead Man's Cemetery.

The Highwayman died Tuesday at the old inn yard. He was born September 4, 1825, in England, to the late Mr. and Mrs. Headless Horseman.

He was a brave young man. He is survived by his brother Frankenstein and his sister Highway Woman.

-- by Dan McElfresh
8A

STUDENT POEM"The Highwayman"

The Highwayman had to involve my beautiful Bess in his plans
 He had to do something to torment this man.
 If it weren't for his coming that night,
 Telling my Bess to watch by moonlight,
 King George's men wouldn't have come.
 My beautiful Bess wouldn't be gone.
 They took her and tied her to her bed.
 They told her to watch, for if he lead
 Down the road toward the inn,
 They'd have their trap ready for him.
 She thought to warn him, there was only one way.
 To take her life, but it would pay.
 Just as she saw the Highwayman coming,
 She fired the musket, her blood started running.
 The Highwayman heard -- He turned around.
 My beautiful Bess lay in a mound.
 The Highwayman didn't hear 'til the next day,
 How Bess took her life to warn him away.
 He started back, not to make it to the inn.
 King George's men got revenge on him.
 Revenge not for them, but for me.
 The Highwayman lay in a bloody sea.

--by Michelle Boyd

8E

Another pre-writing activity I tried was based on an idea I took from John C. Eckman's article, "A Rationale for Teaching Composition," in They Really Taught Us How to Write. Eckman had students track down quotes from lines of poetry, and he succeeded in getting them to learn to use Bartlett's Familiar Quotations as a resource.

Using the quotes idea, I had my students write their own original quotes and we put them in a book containing one quote from each student. This was interesting, fun, and quite successful. A few of their "Quotable Quotes" may be found on page 8.

After using "The Highwayman" and the "Quotable Quotes" booklet as pre-writing activities, I moved the students into a short paragraph assignment. I gave each student a story situation on a file card, and based on the information on the card, they had to write a short paragraph to complete the questions on the card. A student example will follow in this text:



"Putting a plug that has a short in it into a wall socket can be a shocking experience." --Doug Willis

"I go in each direction, not knowing which way to go each day." --Thomas Chester

"Teachers are like rain, when they give homework, they pour it on." --Laura Shell

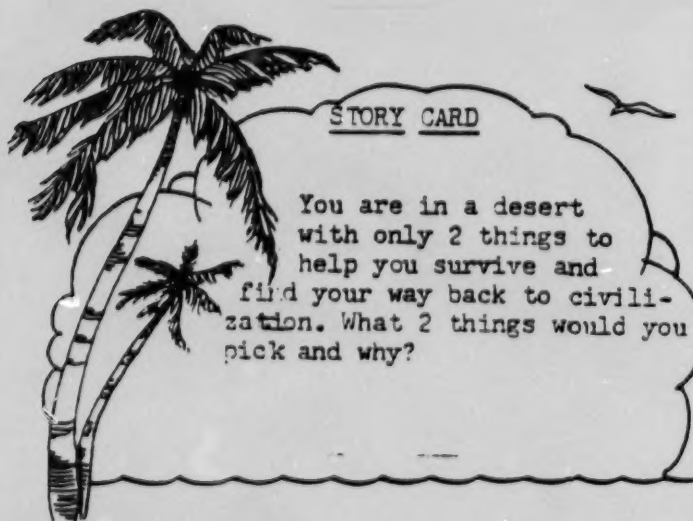
"Life is like a Rubics cube -- always mixed up."
--Gary Mockus

"The sun may shine tomorrow, but without love it will still be cloudy."
--Alicia Shaw

"Life is like a cyclone; you always end up with the dirty deal."
-- Ron Warth

"The only Peace on Earth, is not on earth." -- Darren Hoffman

"When you are made to do something you like to do, it changes it from play to hard work."
-- Nancy Taylor



STORY CARD

You are in a desert with only 2 things to help you survive and find your way back to civilization. What 2 things would you pick and why?

This is an example of a story card used to get students to write a paragraph.

Below the card is one student's answer.

I would have these two things to survive: the first one is water since you need to store fluids in the body to keep you going. Hope would be my second choice because everybody needs some hope.

--Nicole Barrett
8C

The questions on the cards guided the students' thoughts and assisted in an original answer. This particular activity was easily handled in one class period, and class sharing added to the enjoyment of the end product.

D) Vocabulary Development

a,b,c

Another major area of concern for me was vocabulary development for my students. Another teacher in the Licking County Writing Project shared some vocabulary cards at one of our sessions, and I decided I had to try some type of activity to add to this weakness in my curriculum.

Using an "A,B,C" book idea, I had my students design a vocabulary book containing A,B,C...words at the 5th-6th grade level. Finished books were given to the four elementaries in our school district. This type of project not only proved educational and creative for my students but also helped to develop a cooperative rapport with the junior high and the elementaries.

TABLE # 3 shows the words contained in one of six alphabet books. In the final books, these words were also illustrated with magazine pictures. Words that a 5th or 6th grade student might not know were defined. Some words were included in the book because they are often misspelled.

TABLE # 3 - VOCABULARY BOOK	
A = afghan, albatross, acrobat	N = nicotine, nylon, numismatics
B = bouquet, beret, broccoli	O = octagon, osmosis, orchid
C = chameleon, chlorophyll	P = physique, penguin, poinsettia
D = dromedary, doily, dinosaur	Q = quadruple, quiver, quotient
E = embroidery, egret, eruption	R = rotund, receipt, rambunctious
F = Frankenstein, flamingo, fawn	S = stalagmite, streusel, scorpion
G = grebe, gregarious, glaucoma	T = tallow, tandem, tiers
H = harmonica, hammock, hyacinth	U = ukelele, urn, umiak, urchin
I = isosceles, iris, infantry	V = valedictory, volleyball, vertebrate
J = Jamaica, jocose, jerkin	W = wallaby, waxen, weathervane
K = koala, khaki, kerosene	X = xylophone, xerophyte, xylograph
L = leprechaun, lye, lapidary	Y = yacht, yodeling, younker
M = macrame, mosaic, mantis	Z = zucchini, zinnia, zany

Needless to say, my students have written more than ever before. I have gained a lot of insight into the writing process, and I am anxious to try even more ideas.

Licking Valley Jr. High
Newark, Ohio

MOTIVATING THE RELUCTANT TEACHER

by
Phyllis Fisher

I was a reluctant teacher of the written word, and before I proceed any further please note the underlining and use of the past tense verb was.

What happened to change my outlook? I attended and participated in the seven sessions of the Licking County Writing Project. Oh granted, my metamorphosis is not complete, (I am terrified as I look at this blank sheet of paper before me), but with the ideas, enthusiasm, and support generated by this group of teachers and advisors, my idea of the elements which make up a stimulating writing experience for students took on a new form.

While collecting my thoughts for this article I thought of the participants in the Project. The program had originally been designed for secondary teachers, but the final selected group included three elementary teachers, two sixth grade teachers (of which I am one) and one third-grade teacher. Noting this fact was important, I felt, for surely we, in the elementary schools, must claim a large portion of responsibility for the enthusiasm, or lack thereof, for writing. Most children begin school with a desire to share, verbally, experiences important to them. They know there are other ways to share these experiences, the written word, being one mode, and are generally anxious to record events. But what happens between the time the child enters first grade and the time he or she is ready for junior high school? Much of that eagerness is gone!

You may say, "Well, that is to be expected, the child's interests, needs, and attitudes have changed." True, at that age the student views the world differently and his priorities have shifted. On the other hand, I feel we must accept some of the responsibility for that change of attitude. It is with this thought in my mind that I direct this article primarily toward the elementary school teacher for we are the ones who must structure the foundation upon which the junior high school and high school teachers can build.

How Do We Turn It On?

An incident told by Maureen Applegate, a teacher writing for When Children Write, for the Association for Childhood Education International, emphasizes the above question. One evening her neighbor, Mrs. Murphy, walked to the garage, and soon after called out to her husband, "But honey, it won't start!" There were more steps to the garage, masculine steps, followed by an outburst of delighted laughter as its owner roared, "After

all, Mrs. Murphy, it isn't magic—you have to turn it on before it starts!"

"Paint a picture!" "Write a poem!" "Create a story!" We glibly ask these things of the children in our rooms from day to day. When children receive such instructions—cold—they are as dismayed as the miller's daughter in the German folktale whose royal husband commanded her to spin straw into gold. They are dismayed and uncreative. Creative writing is not magic; except for the most creative children, we must turn it on before it will start.

Asking a whole class to write on the same subject, without first providing experience in that subject common to all, will get only a thin trickle of creativity at best. For creativity rarely seeks expression unless there is enough experience behind it that the child feels he has something to say.

True, it takes the three-dimensional world of many books, visual aids, and radio in the hands of skilled teachers to catch and hold the interests of today's child, the stimulating teacher is still the Pied Piper who can call the tunes and the children will follow whether the music comes from a mouth organ or a brass band. What are some enriching experiences which you can provide for your children so that they will want to write, will be ready to write, and will have something to say when they do write? The teacher is more important than the thing. How can a teacher foster creative expression? Three categories come to mind.

1. Children need help with ideas for plot and content.
2. Children need language help.
3. Children need help with process, methods of getting started, gathering ideas and words.

Process Help

Many children have little idea of how to get started with stories or poems and not much past experience to draw upon, even though they may be in the intermediate grades. One useful way to help children begin is to do some wholeclass writing; that is, the teacher takes over the mechanics of writing while the class talks out the ideas and plot. Rather than use the chalkboard, in this kind of exercise, the teacher may jot down ideas on a pad of paper as they come forth and later transfer the finished product to chart paper, the chalkboard, or medium of choice. In this stage, much can be talked and re-talked—plot ideas and language to be used—without making final decisions. No final product need be written out, it can be talked and left at that. After all, stories were handed down orally for generations, both before the development of writing and before large numbers of people could read.

You will want to be accepting of all ideas at this stage, neither criticizing nor praising, but using such verbal behavior as, "That's one idea." "Would someone like to add to Jack's idea?" The use of praise or rejection discourages the variety and number of contributions, for children will try to outguess the teacher about what is good, and, therefore, right.

The class may continue to work as a total group from time to time throughout the year, at the same time that they begin to work as individuals and in small groups. It may be beneficial, after some wholeclass experiences, for the teacher to work with one group of perhaps five to eight children, while the rest of the class observes. This might be done several times, with different pupils participating. When the total class is working in small groups, the teacher should be available for help, moving from group to group as the need arises. Groups may be made up of only two students, exchanging ideas and working together in the actual writing. You may wish to join one of these groups as an active member. One of the points brought out in our discussions during the Project was this: Do not give an assignment that you would not be willing to do yourself, in other words, work and write right along with the children!

Plot and Content Ideas

At this point you may be thinking, "I know all of these techniques, but the reason I am reluctant to teach writing is that I come up dry when thinking of ideas to assign." That has been a problem for me; I felt my assignments were always rather haphazard, therefore, I did some brainstorming and research. The following list of ideas is by no means all original. I'm sure you have seen or heard some of these before, but I thought that perhaps having them in one resource book, this issue of FOCUS, might make a handy reference for your plans.

1. Tell or read a story to the class and stop at a logical point, letting the children supply a variety of endings. Then examine the author's ending.
2. Read or tell a story in its entirety and then invent other possible endings.
3. Make up sad or happy endings for the same story.
4. Extend the adventures of the characters in a story which the children know.
5. Write a novel or serial, using the same key characters, perhaps persons known to the class.
6. Tell the beginning and end of a story and let the children speculate on a variety of middles. Then examine the central portion of the original story.
7. Make up stories from the viewpoint of another character in the story: for example, from the point of view of the wolf in Red Riding Hood, the stepsisters in Cinderella, the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk, the rat in Charlotte's Web. The task ordinarily would be to make these characters more sympathetic without changing the essential storyline.
8. Speculate about some "ifs": "What would it be like if I were an only child?" or, ". . . if I had ten brothers and sisters?"

"What if our teachers could only say 'yes'?" "What if there were no schools?" "If I could be any animal I chose, what would I want to be?"

9. Make up myths: why Santa wears a red suit; why the witch flies on a broomstick; why we cry when we're sad instead of laughing.

10. Provide beginning sentences or portions of beginning sentences: "Suddenly I knew the reason why no one would look at me." "Stop, Stop, I yelled." "The little boy cried so hard he thought he would never stop." "Everything looked marvelous, but then I realized that something was dreadfully wrong." "Jane's mother would never let her . . ." "My perfect friend would be someone who . . ." "When the colt tried to run away he . . ." "I was really mad because. . ."

11. Provide ending sentences: "And that's why the two girls never spoke to each other again." "Well, after that I never loaned my bicycle to anyone again." "And so the catastrophe had a happy ending after all—I think!"

12. Make up stories incorporating certain words: a teacher, a bug and a motorcycle; a bear, a bowl of fruit and a book; a spaceman, a candy bar and an overcoat.

13. Put objects into paper bags and ask the children to invent stories about them. The bags might include: a pencil, a nail and a glove; a piece of paper, a picture and a pair of eyeglasses.

14. Pretend that inanimate objects can speak and make up stories utilizing their conversation: "What does my math book say about me after I've gone home?" "What does our chalkboard think about us?" "What does my bed say about me after I get up in the morning?"

Children can begin to work on their own ideas and suggest ideas to others, but you will want to be ready to provide plot and content help when necessary throughout the year.

Language Help

Once students are helped with ideas or are able to draw upon their own store of experiences, they often become quite skillful in the area of plot and content sequence. However, they usually require help with language, to add interest to their work and make ideas more vivid and expressive. Children often do not realize that one reason why certain stories and poems are more interesting than others is because the author has used words well. Children tend to utilize the same rather limited store of words over and over, despite the fact that they own a more varied language supply.

Students will not necessarily know (to indicate one area of possible language help) that conversation can add interest to stories. Rather than use the actual spoken words of characters, they will tend to relate incidents without employing conversation. ("He told his mother he didn't want

to go," rather than "'Ma,' he said 'I won't go to school, and I won't, I won't!'" When using conversation they often rely heavily upon the verb said, usually placing it at the beginning of sentences. They can be helped to see that varying the position of the speaker's identification and the verbs used will increase the story's interest.

The search for different words and other ways of saying things can be an interesting task for children. "What other words can we use for sad, happy, fast, silly?" The introduction of metaphor and simile, without necessarily using those terms, may enter at this point. "How can we say this so that the reader or listener will see, as closely as possible, what we see in our own heads? What is it like--what can it be compared to?" For synonyms, a thesaurus is invaluable. At Halloween time, for instance, one might list other words for witch, black and flew and then see what the thesaurus has to offer.

Another helpful language activity is one which takes simple, rather barren, sentences and fleshes them out so that they become more vivid. "The noise frightened the boy, and he ran down the stairs," can become, "Bang! The quaking boy flew down the staircase like a Titan rocket."

Sometimes, though, students begin to think that using large numbers of descriptive words automatically creates good sentences. "Johnnie was a poor, bedraggled, lonely boy who never had any money of his own to spend; so one clear and sunny day, when he saw a crisp, brand-new dollar bill lying on the littered, dirty sidewalk, he jumped with delirious joy," may be better than, "Johnnie was a poor boy. One day he was happy because he found a dollar." However, "What luck! A whole dollar right there on the sidewalk! To Johnnie that was a fortune," is as expressive as the first example and far less ornate.

As in every area, the manner in which you deal with language will affect the amount of creative expression which results. Rejecting comments, boring vocabulary assignments, copying papers over, looking up misspelled words, being told that someone else's work is much better than one's own--these methods discourage rather than encourage creative writing. Usage and spelling are not unimportant; but, if there is too much stress on this, many children will adopt the line of least resistance--short, dull, two- or three-sentence pieces of work which are easy to copy over and use words which can be spelled.

Are You Less Reluctant?

I have tried to touch upon some areas that have caused you to be reluctant about writing in the classroom, and offered some helpful suggestions. Along with helping me with my students' struggles to become good writers, this Project encouraged me to do more of my own writing. I hope you will too, for in so doing you will find yourself shedding some of your former reluctance. Courage to invent must be supported.

Lakewood Middle School
Hebron, Ohio

TELL ME, DON'T WRITE ME!

by
ELIZABETH E. LANE

For years I have been a note-writer. I first wrote important notes to friends all through junior high and high school; I then wrote bored comments (usually critical of the prof's lecture, jokes, hair, tie, nostrils, etc.) in the margins of my college notebooks; finally, I wrote crucial and enlightening - inspiring, even! - comments on my writing students' papers. For the past nine years of teaching, I have spent much time responding to my students' writings with margin comments or end-of-paper comments. In fact, with some students, I knew I spent more time writing evaluative remarks than they spent in writing the assignment itself.

I realized all along, the hazards of being such a dedicated, martyr-like comment-writer. I tried to avoid the obvious situation in which the student takes one glance at the grade, wads up the paper and heads for the trash can. I explained to everyone to PLEASE take time to read my comments and ask (they rarely did) for clarification on points that were unclear. I explained that the length of commentary was not linked to how well or poorly they had written. I let them know how important to me their writing was and, therefore, that I accepted the responsibility of writing all those comments to them. I mean, we had to communicate, right? Didn't it make sense that in a writing course, we would write to each other?

No.

Well, sort of.

But not really.

What I'm confessing is that no matter how well I prepared them, justified my method, took care in my written reactions, it didn't work the way I wanted it to. Of course, I didn't realize that right away. In fact, it wasn't until I heard other teachers discuss conferencing (the practice of evaluating various stages of student writing in talking to - not writing to - the students) in the Licking County Writing Project, that I decided to change my style.

Don't misunderstand -- of course I had done some degree of conferencing. I had some bits-and-pieces talks with students about their writing, but mainly only when they came to me. The great majority of my suggestions and evaluations

on a one-to-one basis was in writing. That was just my style and, like many teachers, I was reluctant to change.

But after hearing so much in the Writing Project about conferencing, I introduced the idea to my semester creative writing class and they agreed to try what seemed to be a new process to them. They, too, were used to comments all over their papers (and were used to ignoring them, misinterpreting them, or at best, skimming and pitching them). My process is simple, since I am a beginner, and I don't conference with every assignment. Also, I never demand/require a student to follow my suggestions or to revise at all. Most do, but if someone is totally pleased with his/her paper, he/she may submit it in that form. (Of course, that choice involves risks that most grade-oriented students aren't willing to take.)

At any rate, the process is something like this:

1) After twenty minutes, or so, of writing, I begin to desk-hop (no, not literally) and skim through papers. (At first, students were bothered by the reading-over-the-shoulder and I heard comments like, "Here she comes!" "Don't read it yet!" "Wait! It's not ready for YOU to read!" They were used to seeing the teacher as final-judgment-giver and not as helper-along-the-way. They learned to accept the new me.)

2) I make general comments, mainly referring to basic organizational patterns, sentence structure, character development - whatever we're working on - and I question them about their plans for where the rest of the paper is heading (usually, they know). I rarely point out grammar or spelling errors at this stage.

Or, if I conference after the assignment is written instead of during the writing, the process varies a little and resembles this:

1) I read supposedly-final versions of papers, weed out those that need no revision, and make brief notes to myself on the remainder, citing what could be improved.

2) On the day I hand back papers, I give the next writing assignment to get everyone busy and then go from desk to desk, discussing papers, referring to my notes to jog my memory. I especially stress to the entire class that needing a revision does NOT mean the paper is that bad (in answer to the familiar, nervous question, "Was it that bad?") but instead shows that they are very close to having a much better paper if they will just revise some parts.

3) I never put a grade on a paper that I suggest for revision. They get graded on whatever version they turn in again; so far, only one student has ever re-submitted the first version.

My reaction to all this? I'm convinced that it's better than my old method. No one refuses to talk to me. No one can misinterpret my oral remarks because I'm there to explain. I can check out students' responses to my evaluation and "feel out" whether they are defensive, confused, accepting, etc. And best of all, no one throws me in a waste basket like they did with my written comments.

But what do the students have to say about our new "style"? Here are some verbatim reactions:

I like telling people what they did wrong or right in a paper. That way you can explain to the person in depth what you are really looking for in a paper. I think it helps the student more, too, when you tell him what you want and how you think he or she has done. It is nice to just talk.

I don't really mind whether you talk to us or write to us, but when we sit and talk, I'm always surprised at how well you seem to understand what I wanted to write. I think I have seen so many red (or whatever color) markings on my papers that I automatically think whatever the teacher has to say is negative. At least when we talk, you're smiling and red pens don't smile.

Your written comments aren't bad, but it's kind of a nice change to have a teacher come to my desk and tell me exactly what is good and not so good. Sometimes I feel embarrassed or on the spot but when you have something good to say, it's neat to hear. And even the bad parts are easier to understand when I can discuss things with you instead of just reading what you had to say.

Sometimes I feel less threatened by written comments but I'm getting more at ease with conferencing. The only thing is, I wouldn't want to give up written comments entirely because you write us things like "Tuck" and "This kills me" and "You crazy person!" and I don't think you'd say that in a conference. So keep writing sometimes.

Tell me, don't write me!

Conferencing isn't for everyone, maybe, and is not particularly THE answer to grading student writing. There are still some unanswered questions, such as, "How does this shorten grading time when now I'm seeing some papers twice instead of once?" (It doesn't.) "Don't your students start talking when you're conferencing with one?" (Oh...sometimes. But it helps when I'm in the midst of them, and not off in a corner. Besides, when did writing become a totally quiet experience? I shush them when they need it, but they usually don't.) "How do you fairly grade a paper that has been revised to your suggestions? Aren't you grading a paper that has a lot of you in it?" (I don't know...probably. That's partly why I don't conference every time. Sometimes they sink or swim on their own.)

Successful conferencing also requires a teacher to be willing to get out from behind the desk and be able to approach all kinds of students about the strange, wonderful, personal, dull, ridiculous, impressive topics they choose. Some of us are somewhat afraid to do this; others are overly critical; others want to be "too nice." The whole process for me is facilitated by using some trust-formation exercises at the start of the course. Students won't open up to me significantly unless they have some understanding of me as a real person -- they have to first "buy into" the ideas that I am a human being (not just a final-judgment-giver), that what they are writing is important, that I care about what they have to say. They need to feel safe, significant, and accepted in order to carry their share of the process.

I don't claim that conferencing is omnipotent, omniscient or omni-anything. It is simply an evaluation technique that was basically new to me, and to my high school students, was easy to adapt to my teaching style, has saved me much writing time (which I've traded for talking time) and given me a way to contribute to students' writing expertise while nurturing my relationship with them in a more personal and immediate way.

Johnstown High School

Johnstown, Ohio

YOU CAN GET AN OUTFIT AND KEEP A JOURNAL TOO!

by
JUDITH KECK

And who among us hasn't read Gathering of Days, Walden, or other journals and been inspired to collect our thoughts, experiences, and inspirations on paper? And who among us hasn't read articles about teachers as writers and promised ourselves to get started really soon - maybe tomorrow.

At the first meeting of the Licking County Writing Project, journals were mentioned and an enthusiastic "let's do it" response was given by maybe ten participants. Well, some of us did and some of us didn't and with as much procrastination as the task could bear, I finally began a journal on November 11, 1981, a momentous occasion.

To follow are selected entries from that journal. They're presented to you to show the frustration, pride, and growth of a journal writer. The content ranges from reactions to reading and viewing, to emotional responses to family events, to collections of thoughts and ideas. I've shared this potpourri because one of my beginning concerns in keeping a journal was that I'd have nothing to write about. However, I discovered that the more I wrote the more I found to write about. As you read, those things in parentheses were added when this article was prepared. I hope that these entries will provide insight that will inspire the reader to take the plunge and become a journal writer too.

11-16-81

It is difficult, even only in a journal. I put it off as long as possible and even as I pick up my pen I think maybe I should read this mail first. Always one more evasion. Will I ever run to writing as I run to reading?

11-17-81

I approach writing in this journal more positively tonight. I even took it to my meeting at the High School to better use my time before the program. Maybe now I'll take my journal instead of a book. Maybe I'll turn into Harriet the Spy, (a children's novel by Louise Fitzhugh about a girl named Harriet who takes a notebook on a daily route and records her observations about friends and neighbors).

11-23-81

Have an idea for a poem - from student writer to teacher. I am my writing, don't bleed on me, don't splash my self with your red pen, my vulnerability pale against blue-lined paper. As if AWK is written on the hollow of

my throat, and SP on the blue vein inside my elbow. The courage it takes to reveal myself to you - I can only drop it and run. I'm an amoeba on your slide examined under your microscope. Your red pen a scalpel - incisions for letting myself spill out to be mopped up and thrown away.

12-1-81

I once thought I had nothing to write about but almost daily I have a thought or idea to jot down, sometimes just a phrase I'd like to keep. But still am having difficulty recording it all here as I regard this as a duty better avoided, at least put off. I continue to be amazed at my pleasure and smug feeling upon completion of entries, so why the foot dragging? I anticipate the day I'll rush to record my thoughts and not seek diversions along the way. This poem by Barriss Mills reflects my own regrets at the unrecorded moments.

Gone Forever

Halfway through shaving, it came --
the word for a poem.
I should have scribbled it
on the mirror with a soapy finger,
or shouted it to my wife in the kitchen,
or muttered it to myself till it ran
in my head like a tune.

But now it's gone with the whiskers
down the drain. Gone forever,
like the girls I never kissed,
and the places I never visited --
the lost lives I never lived.

Barris Mills

Reflections on the Gift of a Watermelon Pickle, Scholastic, 1966,
p. 14.

12-5-81

Have concluded a six-day writing process project with Lakewood Junior High students in Alice Phillips' class. The kids' evaluations revealed that they found conferencing and revising most helpful in improving their work. This surprised me as I thought six days would be too soon for positive benefits to be perceived by students. I assumed more kids would feel negatively about assigned groups. (I used Dan Fader's grouping model from The New Hooked On Books).

I do feel a sense of pride when flipping through journal pages covered with handwriting.

12-5-81

Michele (my older daughter, age 17 1/2, an early High School graduate) is planning to go to Florida to live and work in January. I'm not sure how I feel about it but I'm not against it as I think she needs to flap her

own wings a little. I anticipate a calmer, quieter household...Of course I have some fears and concerns but I suspect that's just mother stuff. She should have fun and work hard and enjoy the sun and make some money. Can't be all that bad if she doesn't become a drug addict or prostitute or get ripped off. All those things could happen to her here if she tried hard enough.

And to my older daughter,
Middle child, my Michele,
Godspeed, with love
From your mother.

12-10-81

Today I continue to think of Michele's leaving. Adolescence must be nature's way of preparing parent and child for separation. The pushing, pulling, tearing, and conflict can leave one so drained that there's no energy left to express love and concern. I resign myself in exhaustion. There's an uneasy truce between us now. Today Michele came to my office to find me on her way to lunch and we went together. We talked cautiously, tiptoeing around each other, glancing at one another from the corners of our eyes, laughing softly but oh so self-consciously. But it made me feel good - like being with a potential new friend when our initial acquaintance had gotten off to a bad start. I have no doubt our suffering has been mutual. I rail against the gods who have assigned us such a bitter, brief acquaintance. Only years of time and love can heal this hurt. This journal writing was sought with need for release.

12-27-81

Public television's presentation of two short stories and a biography of Edith Wharton prompted some reading of her works. Terry Priest (a teacher at Johnstown High School) shared a biography, Edith Wharton by Olivia Coolidge, Scribner's, 1964. This excerpt caught my fancy:

"...Fashions change. The House of Mirth is dated, and for that reason out of style. It is not, however, a bad novel which happened to hit the taste of its day. It is a good novel which does not happen to hit ours." (p. 82)

1-13-82

Saw the first installment of Creativity with Bill Moyers, public television; an interview with Maya Angelou. To paraphrase: My momma says be sure to marry your own husband; too many women spend their time marrying other women's husbands but this time I got my own.

My favorite line from "The Shadyhill Kidnapping" by John Cheever (last night on American Playhouse).

"I am lonely.....I am so lonely I could spit."

2-16-82

I've written no journal entries for some time and I'm not sure why. I've identified some things to write about which have been lost daily for lack of writing. I feel guilty and delinquent. I think journal writing is

good for me and it becomes increasingly more enjoyable. I even enjoy physically putting the words on the page and frequently try to use my best handwriting. For whom? I don't plan for others to read this nor do I feel any anticipation to reread. In a way the latter seems unnatural as if a rejection of my thoughts. But once having purged myself, they're unnecessary discards like old snake skins. However, the oldest of them is only three months old; perhaps they're not properly aged.

2-23-82

The first sunny promise of spring after many greys. Must be the smell of sun drying the wet earth that stirs memories and a poetic attitude. Winter-calloused finger tips seek mother's pulse to ascertain the faintest stirring of spring signs. As a child still prudently buttoned into the winter coat and bonnet tied snugly over my ears to ride the red and yellow tricycle across the sidewalk cracks still oozing mud.

2-23-82

Tonight my journal and I are awaiting the appearance of black feminist, poet and children's author, Lucille Clifton. I need to be here: for my head, to challenge it; for my soul, to assure myself that I can get out on my own and feel comfortable. Lucille Says -

"It's boring to have friends just like you - safe but boring."

"My goal is to live an honest and authentic life."

A young black man in the audience asks her to recite from an alphabet book she's written entitled the Black B, C's, published several years ago. She begins with confidence then slows to a halting, groping in her memory. But he leads her along through several letters. She stops and laughs and asks him how he can do that. He responds that in his all black elementary school, each child memorized them to remind them to be black and proud. This young man has grown up feeling the influence of her work to meet her here, face to face. I'm moved to witness this meeting.

3-17-82

My friend, Pat Mahieu, has written a note that includes a comment about "writing to a teacher of writers." (A reference to the Licking County Writing Project.) Now there's a phrase that delights me - it rolls inside my mouth and swirls across my tongue and around my teeth and satisfies me orally as well as mentally. But even more importantly, I am a writer, as testified by this journal. I share with other writers that common pushing of the pen across the paper and groping for words that make an idea or expression especially ours, to tattoo it with our signature. A presumption to imagine joining hands with Emily Dickenson and Maya Angelou but a thrill nonetheless.

There are more entries between November and February than are recorded here. As I selected these entries I had feelings of both satisfaction and accomplishment with the writing and thinking I have done. I still experience lapses in not routinely writing and find that failure to write brings about failure in reflective thinking and observation. Both June Berkley, Ohio

University, Athens in her presentation to the Licking County Writing Project and Frank Smith in his article "Myths of Writing" (Language Arts, Volume 58, November 7, October, 1981) have stimulated my awareness that writing is thinking, not only communicating.

Writing can create ideas and experiences on paper which could never have existence in the mind...Thoughts are created in the act of writing, which changes the writer just as it changes the paper on which the text is produced...Writing is not a matter of taking dictation from yourself; it is more like a conversation with a highly responsive and reflective person.

- Frank Smith, (see above citation)

Presume to join hands with your favorite authors as you both push pens and mutually struggle to express the thought - if not for someone else, for yourself. The journal writing experience has been a positive one for me; I only hope this article will inspire you to begin - today.

Licking County Board of Education
Newark, Ohio

BUT WHY?

by
Barbara Moore

"But why?" is a phrase I have heard more times than I can possibly count. I was determined that when I heard the "but why?" this year I would remain very calm. I decided that my come-back would be "but why not?" I really thought that these three little words would close the mouths of twenty-two very vocal students. They had evidently never heard of a rhetorical question, because I was immediately bombarded by why not.

"Why not? I will tell you why not. You don't need to know how to write; writing is boring; I don't have anything to say" and my dad says you don't have to write to work in a factory. My favorite why nots were I don't have any paper and I don't have a pen. We all know that a teacher has an ample supply of paper, pencils, and pens; so at least that excuse could be taken away immediately. As I started to discuss the assets of learning to write well, all I could see were the facial expressions of seventeen boys which seemed to be saying this lady is nuts. It was then that I started to think that maybe this lady was nuts. I was ready to say all right, you win. To heck with learning how to write. Let someone else teach you how!

The reluctant writer has presented problems to most English teachers since the beginning of English teaching. I personally felt that most of these students were in my classes and I had had enough of them. But I also had a feeling of guilt. How could I possibly shove this group on to another teacher next year? I decided it was time to stop feeling sorry for myself and get down to some serious soul searching. I too had hated to write, and I still do somewhat, but what had turned me around? As I thought back over my school days, I immediately thought of the English teacher who assigned compositions when the class misbehaved. I knew I wasn't guilty of that mistake. I remembered how I hated going to that class in fear of a composition. There was also the same teacher who bled all over our papers. It seemed that nothing you wrote could possibly please this teacher. Here was a place that I too was guilty. I guess as an English teacher I felt obligated to mark all errors. If something wasn't worded the way I liked, I changed it. So now I had my problem solved. I would institute a new way of grading student writing.

I soon found that a new grading system was not my only answer. I still had too many students who were rebelling against writing assignments. I needed to sneak a pre-writing activity in on this group. Since Christmas was on everyone's mind, I decided a class discussion on family traditions would be appropriate. We were learning a tremendous amount about each other as the bell rang. I felt very confident that the assignment I would give the next day would be a success. "The First Christmas I Remember" was a success. It was at least ten minutes into the period before anyone asked how long does

this have to be. I told them it needed only be a paragraph, but if they wanted to write more, it was fine with me. A few days later they wrote two additional paragraphs entitled "The Year Santa Didn't Come" and "What Christmas Means to Me Now." The students and I were both pleased with what had happened. But then I made a big mistake. I told them that the three paragraphs they had written would be put together to form a composition. To me it seemed very easy; to them, it was an overwhelming task. After everyone, including the teacher, calmed down, they realized that they had already done the hard work. That was left to be done was easy and was accomplished in a few minutes. I felt ecstatic over our accomplishment. Our next writing assignment was a catastrophe.

After reading a story, the class was having a lively discussion as to whether the protagonist was right or wrong. The class was divided on the issue and tempers were growing short. Since most of the students had been very vocal in our discussion, I asked them to write down how they felt and all over it. The next day I collected a dozen papers. When I asked why, those who hadn't handed in papers said they didn't know what I wanted. I was furious. My immediate reaction was what do you mean you didn't understand the assignment. One brave soul said he knew what the assignment was, he just didn't know what I wanted. Now I knew what else I had to change to help my students.

I think that my one brave soul said more than he realized. I finally realized that my reluctant writers were afraid to write for fear of failure. Not necessarily failure with the mechanics involved, that was something they knew they could learn, but with the failure of writing something that I wouldn't like. Now all I had to do was convince them not to worry about what they thought I wanted, just write what they felt about the particular topic. Now I had to put this to practical use.

A few days later we discussed how you describe an item to someone who had no idea what the item was. This exercise was fairly easy in that many of my students were acquainted with one of our foreign exchange students, and they had had the actual experience of describing an item to her. The writing assignment was to describe a non-existent term that I had written on the board. Most of the students picked up on the assignment immediately. They understood that whatever they wrote couldn't possibly be wrong. A few of the students felt that I was trying to trick them and insisted that they be allowed to look the word up in the dictionary. Once they finally understood that I wasn't trying to trick them, they, too, tackled the assignment. This writing assignment had been one of our biggest successes.

Now when I grade a set of papers, the first thing I do is write something encouraging to the student. This is not always easy, but it certainly is challenging. The only errors I regularly mark are fragments and run-on sentences. At the end of each paper I write a note telling the student of spelling and mechanical errors that they should correct. I also make sure that everyone understands that I want to know how they feel, not how they think I feel about the topic.

I still hear a few moans when I assign a composition, and I guess I always will. I would like to believe that my different method of grading, and our understanding that you should write what you feel has made some of my reluctant writers not quite so reluctant. I know that reluctant writers still exist in my classroom; and that no matter how hard I try, there will always be some there. Perhaps the biggest plus to our new system has been a lower frustration level for both the student and the teacher.

Licking Valley High School
Newark, Ohio

SUSTAINED SILENT WRITING

by
Elizabeth A. Wagenknecht

Several years ago, I initiated a Sustained Silent Writing program in my sixth grade classes as a research project for a graduate school class. This year, I decided to try it again, incorporating the newly-acquired techniques for the teaching of writing that were discussed during the Licking County Writing Project. I wondered if the use of these techniques would lead to a greater degree of noticeable improvement than did my project two years ago.

Sustained Silent Writing, similar in theory to its sister program of Sustained Silent Reading, simply provides a period of uninterrupted time to write. The children are encouraged to write thought ramblings, observations, journals, poems, short stories, descriptions, etc. etc. etc. The possibilities for topics about which to write are endless.

The important concepts to keep in mind as a Sustained Silent Writing program is implemented are detailed in the Ohio Department of Education's **HANDBOOK FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY FOR READING IMPROVEMENT**. They are:

1. Set aside a regular time for uninterrupted writing twice a week. Three minutes should suffice initially.
2. Begin slowly and gradually widen the scope of the task.
3. Be sure each student has sufficient paper and pencils or pen before timing the writing.
4. Teachers may aid students by writing the spelling of requested words on the chalkboard.
5. Students' papers are collected. Only positive comments are made; errors are not marked. Records may be kept relative to individual skills needed.

Initially, the emphasis of SSW is on the quantity of writing. Therefore, the students are encouraged to continue writing for a specified time interval. The long term goals of a SSW program are the improvement of quality in terms of written content and expression (State HANDBOOK, p. 19).

There has been some teacher concern regarding the SSW program due to the emphasis on quantity rather than quality. This emphasis is based on the belief that nothing is learned without practice (Allington, 1975). Daniel Fader in **HOOKED ON BOOKS** (1976, p. 99) says: "Just as no one ever learned to read except by reading, no one ever learned to write except by

writing." This opinion was also expressed by several speakers at Licking County Writing Project meetings.

There is support in educational research and literature for this concept of teaching writing. Because of education's return to the teaching of the basic skills, and with the undeniable success of the Sustained Silent Reading programs, many educators have endorsed this idea of students writing on a regular basis. Cunningham (1976) states that research has indicated that improvement of writing skills is not due to formal instruction in grammar, but is due to practice in writing. Bioarsky (1981), in support of this viewpoint observes that students increase their fluency in writing through meaningful daily writing experiences, such as journal writing or free writing programs.

Gutknecht and Keenan (1978) provide another rationale for the SSW program when they state that the goal of a Language Arts program is power in the use of our language while providing for each child's individual needs. They believe that by increasing a child's communication skills, we as educators help to determine at which level they will live their lives. They further state that the ability to express oneself clearly is the single most important skill of modern life.

The project that I undertook this year, and the project two years ago were exceptionally similar in many aspects. Both classes involved in the projects contained about the same number of students, and comments about and attitudes toward writing were very similar. Therefore, I usually am speaking collectively of both classes both years in the following description and discussion of my SSW programs.

Sustained Silent Writing was introduced to the classes which contained students of all ability levels. I explained the project and told them that I needed them to help me in this endeavor, that practicing something usually increases their skills in that area. I explained that it would not be checked for a grade, that I would read it occasionally when I told them beforehand, and that, for the most part, it would be their private thoughts and ideas.

Generally, the idea of writing every day was accepted enthusiastically. No one moaned or groaned excessively, and they liked the idea that I would usually give them the topic about which to write. The only time I did hear complaints was when I told them I would be reading their papers while they were in the process of writing.

Some comments from the beginning of the projects were: "I don't know what to say about that." "My pencil is itching to go!" "Can I write about my horse?" The first several days a few students used a good part of the allotted time going to the pencil sharpener, one went for a dictionary, and another came to my desk to ask how to spell "beautiful." Gradually, I found that many of them began to write as soon as I announced the topic for the day before the timing began, and some wanted to continue writing after I told them time was up.

The first year, I found that writing time was most effectively used

when longer (8 to 15 minutes) than recommended by the State Department of Education. Shorter amounts of time were usually not sufficient for my sixth graders. Therefore, when I began the project the second year, I began the time for writing at 5 minutes and gradually increased it to 15 minutes. This longer time seemed to maintain the interest level and allowed them the opportunity to organize their thoughts more effectively. At this point, they were not just writing words to take up time, they were planning what they wanted to write regarding the topic.

Some of the ideas for topics that I found to be well-received by the students for these short writings are: any occurrence within the last 24 hours; if you could be an animal what would you be; what if people could fly; what if we discovered a food that made us more intelligent; how would you feel if you were a dragon or a weed; describe the life of a pencil; describe the life of your locker; what would you change if you were the principal; make a list of your favorite things about winter; what is the worst thing that ever happened to you. One extremely popular idea was "throw away day." They could write anything they wanted to and we did throw them away without anyone else reading them.

The most obvious improvements I found were in the students attitudes toward writing. They were given a questionnaire at the conclusion of the project and the majority stated that while they previously didn't care for writing, they now found it wasn't so bad. I attribute this to the shortness of the writing experiences and their successes with them. They were not faced with an overwhelming task of writing three pages on their summer vacation that was probably going to be decorated with the red pencil! There was also a carryover into other subject areas where they had to write sentences or stories. Their sentences seemed to be more complex and have more thought in them than before the SSW project.

I still feel, as I felt two years ago with the first project, that Sustained Silent Writing is a worthwhile undertaking. I feel it gives some support to the research findings that practice in the skill of writing equals improvement in that skill. This in turn leads to the increase of confidence as writers on the part of the student. And this is one of the goals of education.

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PEER-CONFERENCING AS A TOOL IN LIGHTENING THE PAPER LOAD

by
Gloria Shanaberg

How can I possibly find the time to read all of the compositions that my students write? Will they be careless and unconcerned when writing papers which they know will not be graded by the teacher? Staring at a stack of ungraded compositions which have been transported at least three times between my home and my desk at school, I ask myself these questions. Being a member of the Licking County Writing Project has convinced me that I am certainly not alone in my battle with the seemingly insurmountable task of paper grading. Other teachers involved in the Project rated the need to better handle the paper load as a major concern and it was the subject of much discussion during meetings. My own musings about this universal dilemma of the English teacher, which were prompted by the suggestions of the other members of the Project, led me to try a new approach to handling the paper load in my own classroom. Following is an account of how I employed peer-conferencing in my class along with my students' and my own evaluation of the project.

Prior to the actual peer-conferencing, several lessons on sentence length and sentence variety were completed in class with emphasis on evaluating sample writings which were provided for the students. Paying particular attention to the skills that they had recently practiced, the students tried their hand at writing a short composition using a subject that each had chosen from an available list.

One class period was spent discussing the concept of peer-conferencing and the students decided upon some guidelines that they would use in their conferencing sessions. Some of these guidelines are as follows:

1. Peer-conferencing would be on a one-on-one basis.
2. Emphasis would be on the most recently practiced skills.
3. Mechanical errors and poor word choices would be recognized.
4. All criticism would be constructive and be directed toward helping the peer/partner better his skills.
5. Digression from the work at hand would not be permitted in the groups.

The class spent two one-hour class periods doing their conferencing. At the end of the conferencing sessions they used their conferencing partners' suggestions to write final versions of their papers, which were placed on file in students' folders.

The same procedure was followed through conferencing to the completion of the next composition. After several assignments had been accumulated in the folders, each student chose one composition to hand in to and be graded by the teacher. Two of these student writings are copied below as they appeared before grading.

THE REBEL

I've been called a rebel by some, a slimeball by others. I prefer to be known as a rebel. I'm totally independent. At my school, they call me Stud McClusky. They call me that because I tell them to. Besides, it has more class than Francis.

I'm tough. Nobody ever messes with me. One time, I beat up a kid because he made a funny face at me. I hurt him alot. Then he ran home and told my mom and dad. I was grounded for a week. That brat never knows when to keep his mouth shut! The guys told me not to worry about it. They said I taught him a good lesson. I don't know, though; these kids in kindergarten are getting tougher every day.

I go to Sodom High School across from the Gomorrah Baré Grill. I know what You're thinking; I'm a poor decadent lad from the poor side of town who never bathes. Well, you're wrong. I'm not so poor and I'm not very decadent. I'm only broke some of the time and I only read Playboy for the interesting articles. I also lie a lot. That's the fun of being a rebel.

3788

as the sun beams down upon its sparkling red paint, there is such austerity that one stands stupified. It stands proudly, seeming to flex its muscles and glaring, daring all to try and match its quality and performance. It is dependable. It never hesitates to trudge through thick and thin. So awesome is its power and so faithful is its heart. But don't let its seeming invincibility fool you, because one can control it with the stroke of a button. Yes, it is rugged and tough to the end. Some call it the King of the Crop or Master of the Land. It does its job well, just like all Internationals.

The students spent one session in class evaluating their experience with peer-conferencing and they wrote some of their reactions for me to read. Here are some of their remarks:

"The exercise involving peer evaluation of papers was beneficial to our writing. When one writes, they know what they mean, but may not express ideas correctly. By allowing someone else to read it, and then conferencing about it, one can see normally unnoticed mistakes and oversights. It also gave the peers a chance to see mistakes and how obvious they are and how to avoid them in their papers."

"Conferencing enabled me to read other styles and varieties of writing. The students in my group commented about my paper; they gave me helpful suggestions. I hope we continue to have peer-conferencing, for I have noticed an improvement in my writing."

"To have someone look at our papers with the same English background gave us a chance to see what a teacher goes through.

On the other hand, with students looking at your paper, the experience is missing that a teacher would have in evaluating papers."

From the teacher's viewpoint, I can say that the peer-conferencing provided more positive than negative results. I certainly reduced my paper grading and had more time to use for planning and other projects at school. The students were able to see what their papers looked like from an evaluator's point-of-view instead of only from the writer's viewpoint. They were also made aware of the different writing styles and capabilities which existed among their classmates.

The only negative point of the peer-conferencing project was that, contrary to one of the guidelines that they had set up for themselves, the students did occasionally stray from the work at hand during conferencing sessions. Even so, in the final evaluation, peer-conferencing proved to be a rewarding and enlightening experience for both teacher and students.

Lakewood High School
Hebron, Ohio

OPERATION SATURATION

by
PEGGY L. PAPRITAN

...March 3, 1982 -- I'd give anything for a tape recorder right now. It's dark in this car and to pull to the side of the road is too dangerous, as is to try and write my thoughts while driving. I pray the words will keep coming long enough for me to get home to my pen and paper. Oh, please don't let this mood escape me before I have a chance to preserve it on paper....

Such were my thoughts as I drove home from the March writing project meeting. During those moments, when I wanted to write so badly, the thought occurred to me that I wanted to write because I had been saturated at our meeting with wonderful ideas to encourage writing and an abounding enthusiasm for language.

As "hokey" as it may sound this experience with operation saturation provided the impetus for me to sit down and share my experiences with teaching writing. Within these moments of insight I also realized that those same moments of language saturation I experienced were the same moments my students could write, did write, and wanted to write.

But what is operation saturation? Simply - fill-em-up with words and experiences and provide a means to catch the overflow. I am convinced that students, regardless of ability, can record their experiences when provided enough prewriting activities to compel them to "spill it" on paper.

To begin operation saturation "fill-em-up." I have tried a variety of prewriting activities since the Licking County Writing Project began and I've discovered these two rules about my activities:

1. The more diversity I incorporate in writing activities the more my students like it.
2. The more enthusiastic I am about the writing the more enthusiastic they are. (Someone once told me enthusiasm can not be taught, but I certainly think it can be modeled.)

Then, decide how often to have students write and how to handle the paperload. (See classroom management for further discussion on how I handle the paperload.) My goal is to have students write daily, which in reality is about 3-4 times a week. Students have two types of writing; free journal writing and assigned journal writing. Both writings are coined journal writings because they are engaged in continually throughout the year. Free journal writings and assigned journal writings are alternated. All writings are filed in individual student folders, which are housed in the classroom.

Below, you'll find topic ideas and samples of student writings for both types of journal writing, as well as a section on classroom management.

TOPICS AND SAMPLES OF FREE JOURNAL WRITINGS

---Personal Problems - Students write about personal problems concerning home, school, with peers, teachers, or other adults. These problems do not always have to be about themselves; they can be about their friends, siblings, etc. Writings are not always expressed in prose. The following poem expresses this teenager's fear of a father-daughter communication block.

FATHER FIGURE

He wears the frame
And body of a father
But is he really?

Is he my friend
Or is he my enemy?

Is he my father
Or is he just the figure?

Can I confide in him
Or do I have to hide things from him?

What am I to say
Or what am I to do?

Should I talk to him?
No, he won't listen.
He never listens.

Paula Casto

---Sappy Poems - Middle school girls are notorious for writing romantic poems. And, why not? They are certainly changing physically and mentally and need a place to express their hidden fears and desires. So, wanting to share a random example of a sappy poem, I announced that I needed a sappy, lovesick poem. Lo and behold the first to respond to my request was a boy! So much for my theory on who writes what! Nonetheless, here are two samples of sappy poems from both genders.

I love her more than a winter's day.
I'm sure it will always stay that way.
The boy who likes is leaving Monday.
But, I know she likes me somehow, someway.

Sometimes the guys who think they're real cool,
Come up to me and make me look like a fool.
They say, "Look at him, drool!"
I'd love to challenge them to a duel!

When she smiles at me
It makes me as happy as can be.
But, it's still plain to see,
I love her, but she doesn't love me.

Tom Caw

Love is something you could never trade.
 Love is something everyone has made.
 Love is peace, joy, and hope.
 Love is something you can't wash away with water and soap.
 Love is something you can sometimes see.
 Love is a feeling deep inside of me.
 Love is not always happy and joyful.
 Love can sometimes be hurting and sorrowful.
 Love is sometimes helping people do what they want to do.
 Love is when someone helps you too.
 Love is something happy to be.
 Love is something I can feel in me.

Tammy Melvin

---Gross and Gruesome Stories - As some students are writing love-sick poetry others are writing sagas full of blood and gore. The following two stories are examples of teenagers need to try and be shocking and provocative.

I am talking to you today from the teacher's lounge where the booger flicker has just struck again. The green boogers are hanging from the walls. Here comes Mrs. Papritan. "Mrs. Papritan, did you see what happened?"

"Yes, it was gross. He came flying in with both fingers up his nose. All of a sudden it was like a machine gun. Boogers were flying everywhere. All the teacher's were screaming."

Well folks, that's the story of the booger flicker in the teachers' lounge on March 17, 1982. Where will he strike next? This is Meme Germani from 92X signing off.

Michelle Germani

My name is Bruno the Bear. I was asked here by the newspaper because I have the most killings that any bear has ever had. What's that you say? You want me to tell you of one of my killings. Okay. I guess it wouldn't hurt.

It was a bright sunny February day and I was hibernating when a man stepped on my bed. Of course, I chased him. I chased him for hours and I was growing tired. How could he run so long and so fast? He finally climbed a tree, that was his biggest mistake.

You see I have a lot of friends that are trees and luckily he climbed my best friend, Woody. I told Woody to drop the man, but he refused saying, "I cannot bring myself to take part in a murder."

I responded by clawing him.

"Okay, if you put it that way I'll drop him. But please don't mess up my beautiful bark. I just had it cleaned yesterday," said Woody.

"Thank-you," I said.

It was sensational. Blood and guts were everywhere. The man was delicious and filling, so I went back to sleep.

I guess what I'm trying to tell you is: "Don't go stepping on a bear's bed or you'll never step on anything again."

Rick Mourné

---Serials - Numerous students enjoy writing serials modeled after the daily "soaps." Tammy took several free journal writing days to compose the following chapter in: As the World Returns.

As our story continues...

Joe has just wrecked his motorcycle and is immediately being rushed to Cedar's Hospital.

Meanwhile...

Joan Foxx is in her room listening to records. Suddenly, the telephone rings. Joan rushed to answer it.

"Is this Joan Foxx?" asks the voice.

"Yes, this is she," she said.

"We have some startling news. Joe Johnson has just wrecked on his motorcycle. He has an injury of the spine. As they rushed him into emergency he yelled out your name. He is in surgery and will be out any minute. We thought you might want to know," the nurse said.

"Which hospital is this?" asked Joan.

"Cedar's Hospital," the nurse replied.

As Joan arrived at the hospital, Dr. Michales rushed out of surgery and asked, "Are you Joan Foxx?"

"Yes. Will Joe be all right?" she asked.

"Yes, amazingly he made it through surgery. He is in the recovery room," said Dr. Michales.

Joan heard Joe yell out, "Joan, Joan Foxx."

"Yes, yes my love, I am here," she responded.

As Joan walked in Joe awoke.

"How are you?" she asked.

"Except for being a little dizzy I guess I'm O.K.," he replied.

"The doctor said I'd go home in a few days."

The two lips met and Joe and Joan kissed for a long time.

After the kiss was over Joan took a deep breath and said, "Well I'll see you tomorrow." Joan waved and as she left she said, "I hope you get better soon."

As she walked down the hall and all the way home she thought of the kiss...

Continued...

Tammy Smyers

---Letters Never Sent - Students are encouraged to write letters to peers, teachers, and parents which will never be sent. Students frequently need this outlet for animosities and euphoria when something terrible or terrific has just occurred. Once students have had an opportunity to attend to these emotions they are ready to focus their attentions on more conventional classroom activities.

Dear God,

Today are basketball cuts. I'm so nervous. I doubt that I'll make it.

Last night three girls quit. I wouldn't quit after running all that time and working so hard.

I hope my friends make it.

I really can't stop shaking. My stomach is turning circles. I can't eat, concentrate on my homework and I couldn't sleep last night.

I find out if I made the final team after tryouts. Our coach is going to make all of her final decisions immediately after tryouts. I hope I don't mess up.

I hope tryouts go fast. I want to get tryouts over with and all of my crying done. (That is if I don't make it.)

If I don't make it, I hope nobody makes fun of me.

God, please help me.

Love, Shelly

P.S. THANKS GOD!!

Shelly Gardner

---Letters to Me - Once again students are encouraged to write letters, but this time to me. These letters may or may not be given to me. Letters students wish for me to respond to are turned in to a specially marked box; so that I am alerted that this paper requires my immediate attention. All letters are returned, with comments, the next school day. (For more information on comments and corrections see Classroom Management Section, to come!) At the onset this began as typical friendly letters; now it has expanded to poems, stories etc. to which students are asking my response. The poem below brought a tear to my eye and reminded me of my purpose for teaching school.

FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL

I know a person
that is the best teacher around.

I know a person
whose goals know no bound.

I know a person
who is the best everywhere.

I know a person
that gives each class special care.

I know a person
whose love she will share.

I know a person
who will always be there.

I know a person
who can get mad.

I know a person
who can be sad.

I know a person
who can change her sorrow.

I know a person
who will be there tomorrow.

I know a person
you know her too.

As a matter of fact
that person is you.

Tammy Melvin
Chris Riley

---Writings from Pictures - Many students enjoy creating stories around pictures. I keep a box of pictures, which I pirate from many sources, to encourage writings of personification, fantasies, mysteries, literature comparisons, etc. This is really helpful to the reluctant writer. (By the way, K-Mart's discount book table is an excellent source for all kinds of books with color pictures.) This story was inspired by one of the pictures.

The wind was blowing through my hair as I watched the ship sail away, and with it taking my beloved husband. It was early spring so the sand was cold, but the wind was warm upon my face. As I sat and watched the ocean roll in and out I longed for the day my husband would return; so again we could be the happy couple we once were. As the days pass I've seen no sign of the ship's return, but the letters he sends reassure me that one day soon he'll be in my arms again.

Sue Canter

---Word Association - Many journal writers use a technique called word association to cleanse their cluttered minds and delve into their subconscious. For my students it is a means of writing something when nothing will come. I assure students that if they just start writing anything that eventually some thought will come to them. I even read them one of my word association writings that turned into reflective thoughts about my students. But it wasn't until one of my students attempted the process herself that the usefulness of this technique was proven. The following poem was developed by word association.

I don't know what to write
So I'll use my teacher's hint.
I'll try to think of something
But my mind has gone and went.
I'll try to gather my thoughts
And come up with something neat.
Cause if I don't hand in a writing man
She'll really give me the heat.
I'll try to think of words
But they're really hard to find.
Cause there's really nothing presently
Going on inside my mind.
Oh, my goodness, oh glory be,
But what do I find before me?
I didn't think I'd do it.
And boy to my surprise
Here lies a poem
Before my very eyes!

Chris Riley

---Suggestions for Word Associations - Even the most reluctant writer, which can be all of us some of the time, can be successful with word association. The following are suggestions I use to "get kids started."

- Write a list of all of the people you know.
- Write all of the colors.
- Write down everything in this classroom.
- Write down everything you see outside the window.
- List all the parts of your motorcycle.
- Write pairs of rhyming words.
- Write all of the words that begin with a specific letter of the alphabet.

Word lists help students increase awareness of vocabulary and the range of their experience; it also causes them to stretch their thinking. Sometimes these word lists develop into a more finished product. The following alliterative writing started as a student list of "S" words.

One day Silly Sam saw a salient swan that was swimming in his pond. Silly Sam just went on swallowing his cereal, Slim Slommer. When Silly Sam stopped eating breakfast, he started playing Smack the Sucker. Soon Silly Sam skipped to his Super Slim Bike. It was 6:16 when Silly Sam got back to his swamp house and to his sickening mother. She had supper set. It was a super supper!

Bob Corwin

TOPICS AND SAMPLES OF ASSIGNED JOURNAL WRITINGS

---Literature as a Writing Stimulator - I use lots of young adult novels in the classroom: The Great Gilly Hopkins, Bridge to Terabithia, Tuned Out, Lisa, Bright and Dark, A Day No Pigs Would Die, etc. After completing a novel or short story ask students to write on any number of the following:

- How are you like one of the characters in the book?
- How are you different from one of the characters in the book?
- Would the main character in the book be a good neighbor? Why or why not?
- Would you like the main character to be your friend? Why or why not?
- Are the characters believable? Why or why not?

From these suggestions you might receive something like the following: The character I'm going to write about and compare myself with is Gilly from, The Great Gilly Hopkins, by Katherine Paterson.

Gilly was a foster child. She was once satisfied with her foster parents, but then she was taken away to another foster home by her social worker. This caused Gilly to be afraid to love anyone else that tried to love her, since obviously the same thing may happen again and again. When people tried to be friends with Gilly she automatically put her guard up. If someone did hit a soft spot Gilly put the wall up even higher.

Although I'm not a foster child, like Gilly I know how she feels that she must put her guard up; and I too tend to make snap decisions, which I regret later. A lot of times I say things I don't mean because I'm afraid if I do say something I really mean I'll be taken for granted. I know this happens because people have used me for a friend when they couldn't find anyone else. To them it seemed alright to use my friendship, and when someone "better" came along it was "bye."

Like Gilly, I've changed and I'm taking the risk of letting me become me again. I've become better friends with people and now I am glad I take that risk.

Beth Polyak

---Trade Books as Models - This style of writing is applicable for all ability levels from the most skillful writer to the most reluctant writer. My students favorite story to model is, Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, by Judith Viorst. (See the following sample below.) Other good stories to model are: Rosie and Michael by Judith Viorst, Amelia Bedelia,

by Peggy Parish, The Giving Tree, by Shel Silverstein, and The King Who Rained, by Fred Gwynne. Don't be afraid to use picture books with older students, my students love them!!

A VERY, AWFUL BAD DAY

Oh no, it's going to be a very sad, awful bad day! I just woke up and I'm 25 minutes late. My alarm clock broke and I have a headache. I know it's gonna be a very sad, awful bad day.

I can't find my toothbrush and I can't find my shoes. I'm sure it's gonna be a very sad, awful bad day.

I missed my bus and that made my mom fuss. It's gonna be a very sad, awful bad day.

When I got to school all of the kids made fun of me because my teeth were green and my hair was a mess. I didn't have shoes and I had a headache. It's gonna be a very sad, awful bad day.

My headache made me get an F- on all of my papers and then I forgot to take my homework home. So tomorrow will be a very sad, awful bad day when I get an F- on my unfinished homework.

You know, it's been a very sad, awful bad day.

Mike Justice

---Open Ended Sentences - These can lead to a finished story, a poem, or a free verse, as shown below. I am intrigued that this kind of stimulus can trigger so many different kinds of responses.

Monday morning is like...

- ...having impacted wisdom teeth.
- ...a migraine.
- ...the 24 hour flu.
- ...sitting on freshly chewed gum.
- ...falling out of a tree.
- ...spinach casserole.
- ...a mouthful of dirt.
- ...learning the lifecycle of a roach.
- ...Mrs. Papritan's class.

Ron Arps

---Imaginary People - One of the most humorous and creative writings emerged from the story starter written below. I hope you enjoy it as much and I did.

You are a famous steophemerologist. Explain who you are and what you do.

I Scott Hayes, famous steophemerologist being of sound mind and upset stomach, proclaim that this is my last will and testament. This will, will cancel all wills before and after this will.

I will leave my possessions and belongings in this order:

To my dear son, Arnold, I leave my steophemerologist company. (A steophemerologist inspects flyswatters.) I know Arnold can handle the job, he has assisted me for many years in inspecting the most high class flyswatters.

To my wife I leave my only share of A.T.T. stock which is valued at over \$5.98.

And to my mother-in-law, Jill, who I promised to mention in my will, "Hi, Jill."

In witness whereof I write my name on this document the 31st day of February, 1996.

Scott Hayes

---Personification - Numerous students feel comfortable writing about why they like their favorite sport. These stories are usually repetitious and boring, to say the least. So, when Angie wanted to write about her favorite sport, basketball, I suggested she write it from the point of view of the ball. I liked the following story so much that I developed an assign writing about favorite sports, hobbies, etc. using the personification genre.

"Wow! It's the night of a big basketball game!" Joey yelled excitedly, walking into the gym.

Voit the basketball said, "I hate basketball games! These people, just like Joey, don't know what it's like to be a basketball. I always get thrown around and hit into the backboard. Then there's dribbling. I hate to be dribbled; hitting the floor, hitting the hand, back to the floor, back to hand, over and over again. If they only knew where they were hitting me!"

"Another thing I can't stand is when people yell at me. It's not my fault that a person can't shoot. They always blame me for their silly, immature mistakes. If people only knew what agony I go through when they throw me up against the wall or throw me at other people."

"Another complaint I have is when the referee calls me a 'black ball' or a 'green ball,' I always thought I was orange. Those referees are color blind!"

"Oh! No! Here comes the team. Another game, no time to talk, bye!"

Angie Tittle

---Letters to an Object - When I teach letter writing I am sometimes bored reading the typical teenage friendly letter. So I extended the personification idea to include letter writing. Students wrote a letter to an object or the object "wrote" a letter to the student. The following letter to the retainer brought back many memories.

Dear Retainer,

I'm not too crazy about you. There are a couple things I would like to talk to you about.

The first problem I have with you is that everytime I eat I get smooshy, yucky stuff in you, and it looks totally sick! When I eat a sandwich at lunch time I'll take you out and all of my friends will look at you and say how sick you look.

The second problem I have with you is that when I chew gum I get gum stuck in you and I have to take you out, and peel the gum off of you.

You're going to have to change, because I can't, and will not, stop eating and chewing gum.

Sincerely,
Tammy Braun

---Concrete Poetry/Shape Poetry - All of my students, regardless of ability, enjoy writing this type of poem. Students particularly enjoy stumping the teacher with somewhat obscure shapes. Perhaps Brian's poem will stump some of you.

```

H       N       Y       N       S
E       A       O       I D      I
R       C       U       K O      E
B       R       G       T   F    I
I       A       U       A   C    B
E       C       E   H       A   R
I   A       S   W       R   E
S           S           H

```

Brian Kaefe

---Diamond Poetry - The versatility of this simple poem construct has amazed me. Not only is it a simple form for students, but with slight variations continually challenges students to search for words. The basic poem form is: one word, two words, three words, four words, three words, two words, one word.

Variations - Antonyms - The first and last words must be antonyms.

Synonyms - The first and last words must be synonyms.

Parts of speech - One noun, two adjectives, three participles, any four words, three more participles, two more adjectives, repeat the noun.

Leslie's poem is an antonym style diamond. Notice how it develops from war to peace.

```

      war
    hate, anger
  fighting, killing, crying
disagreement, hurt, guns, death
  ending, returning, loving
    quiet, friends
      peace

```

Leslie Maroukis

I

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT OR HOW TO HANDLE THE PAPERLOAD

If you've reached this point in my paper you're probably saying, "It's not possible. She can't possibly assign all that writing and grade it." Well, you're half right. I do assign all of it, but I don't attempt to grade, or even read, nearly all of it. My bookkeeping system and evaluation techniques are described below. So read on, it really isn't that painful!

---Time for Writing - As I said earlier my students write 15 minutes daily, usually at the beginning of the period. I begin the year with seven or eight minutes and work up to 15 minutes. Free journal writing and assigned journal writing are alternated from day to day.

---Rules for Writing - These few brief rules make my job a lot easier and a lot less hectic.

1. All writings must be dated.
2. All writings are kept in student folders and housed in the classroom. Folders never leave the classroom.
3. No talking during writing time. Students are permitted to sharpen pencils and ask me for assistance. (An overwhelming majority of my students voted for the no-talking rule.)
4. No writing will be read by the teacher without student's permission. (See Teacher Role under Classroom Management for more details.)
5. One writing out of every five or six will be revised and turned in for evaluation. (See Evaluation under Classroom Management for more details.)

---Teacher Role - By declaring that I will not read any writing without student permission, and then living up to that statement, students soon learn not to be so inhibited. I have discovered, however, that during journal writing I must circulate around the room to insure that students are writing and not doing something else. When I do read over their shoulder it is with their permission and a wave of the hand tells me to "move on - this is private."

As I read bits and pieces of these beginning papers I don the hat of grammarian, thesaurus, dictionary, champion speller, encourager, and idea giver. At the moment of touching the pencil to the paper students need me as a "guide on the side and not a sage on the stage."

I am surprised at how often students are stumped on one word and refuse to continue writing until they can supply the missing piece. Call it lack of maturity or whatever, the fact remains that if I supply the word, the spelling, an idea, or the spark of an idea, students can continue to write and are less likely to lose their place. There is plenty of time once their thoughts are written for them to use the mechanical resources available in the classroom.

Earlier I stated that I respond to any student work when specifically submitted for my comments. These comments are normally on content and in answer to a student's sharing of a personal problem or experience. I never respond to the grammatical aspects of these writings unless it is requested.

---Evaluation - Evaluation of student writing is based on point accumulation. Points are earned in two ways. The first is a reward for writing daily. I assign students 5 points for every 5 days of completed journal writing. If one or

more writings are missing, without a personal note indicating student's dates of absence, students receive no reward points. I examine these papers and record the points at the student's desk while students are writing in their journals.

Students must turn in one writing of their choice out of every six or seven writings. Students select for evaluation the writing they like the best, or would like to revise. Before turning it in students pair and inspect each others papers for errors. When the writing is turned in I read it, conference with the student, and the student rewrites the paper and resubmits it. This process is continued until both student and I are satisfied with the product. Most students receive the maximum number of available points for a writing. I base these points on the student's ability to follow the writing process. It is my belief that any student who writes, revises, conferences, rewrites, submits paper, conferences again, and rewrites a final product deserves credit for that effort as well as the product. My goal is for students to experience the process of writing and not be deterred by a letter grade looming over their heads.

CONCLUSION

So there you have it, from fill-em-up through evaluation. Operation Saturation is my process of language experiencing, writing, revising, conferencing, revising, conferencing, and revising until both teacher and student are satisfied with the product. If you're still not convinced that you can manage all of this or that your students will write, read on and see what my students say about the writing process.

- You don't read it unless we ask you to.
- I like the part where you get to write whatever you want, even if it's the same word over and over again. Somedays you just can't think of anything to write.
- We get to work independently without waiting for slower people.
- We can say anything we want in our journals.
- I have some time to think about something that may be bothering me.
- People are quiet in the room for awhile and I can write better with quiet.
- Anything you write is ok. Even if you are having a bad day, Mrs. P. understands.

Enjoy!

Watkins Middle School
Pataskala, Ohio

HOW I USED TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES TO TEACH SENTENCE COMBINING

by
Steven M. Connor

For the last fifteen years, I've taught ninth grade English in a small, rural school district in Central Ohio. At the beginning of each school year I encounter the same choppy, monotonous writing styles capable of giving the most diligent evaluator a splitting headache. The majority of the sentences are short and simple with the usual subject-verb pattern, and those that are not, "the marathon sentences," as I call them, are the ones that need the most work.

Lately, I've been to several writing conferences and have found that the current trend is to spend less time on grammar and focus more on the writing process—pre-writing, writing, revising and editing. This is all well and good; however, in September, most of my students have problems with the revising and editing parts, so I spend the first nine weeks of the school year teaching sentence structure and sentence variety. From there, we can move on to bigger and better things; and thank goodness, the headaches begin to disappear.

My procedure is to pick a little bit of the "old" and choose a little of the "new." After all, most of the research compiled on the teaching of writing was done by those who learned to write in a traditional classroom; and, further, I'd be the last to admit that I was one who would resist change in these modern times.

The "old" is teaching through the formal rules of grammar—the basics. The "new" is sentence combining. This coalition has helped to improve the writing styles of my incoming freshmen. Their newly-found variety makes reading their papers more like a relaxing ride in a Rolls Royce on a freshly blacktopped road than the previous trip in that broken-down jalopy, hopelessly dodging the ever-present potholes.

These more complex, mature writing styles are accomplished by teaching several familiar constructions, namely the adjective and adverb clauses, the participial and gerund phrases, and parenthetical, and transitional expressions. Once the students learn to use these constructions effectively, through multiple homework assignments, they develop that rhythm and flow characteristic of all good writers.

One of the major concerns of English teachers who teach the basics of grammar is whether the students are benefitting from doing their homework sentences or just going through the motions. We don't really have the time to check every homework paper because of all the other assignments that have to be graded; however, we are aware of the importance that homework assignments play in the instruction of basic grammar.

A successful activity that helps ensure that the homework is at least attempted to be done properly is the "board quiz." This activity has been successful for me because it is a game that appeals to the student's competitive natures. The competition could be boys against the girls or whole classes competing among themselves. The latter is the one I employ in my own classrooms.

First, I obtain a large three-foot roll of paper from the art supply and cut off about five feet of it. With magic marker, I divide the paper into four equal sections representing my four ninth grade general English classes. At the top of each section, I write the names of every student in that class; also, each class selects a nickname. Some of this year's nicknames were the "Brainstorms," the "Lightbrights," the "Teacher's Pets," and the "Intellectuals." The chart is then hung in a room in a conspicuous place where any of the students from any of the classes can view it.

The game itself is simply played. The day the assignment is due, I call up to the board ten students to do the sentences assigned for homework. Once they have sat down, I ask them questions about their sentences; usually, I take three points off for a written mistake and two points for an oral mistake. This works because even if the students copy their homework from other students, they still have to know their sentences inside and out, which is determined by the oral questioning. Also, review questions are asked. This means that no matter what we are studying, the students are responsible for material covered previously. This kind of inculcation helps the students retain much of the materials covered in the unit.

The following dialogue taped during class illustrates the effectiveness of the board quiz. The lesson was on adjective clauses; students were to underline the adjective clause, circle the relative pronoun and draw an arrow to its antecedent.

SUE'S English is a subject that is very important.
SENTENCE

TEACHER: Minus 3 points; can anyone tell me why I took off 3 points on this sentence?

JOHN: (A He drew his arrow to the wrong word. The antecedent is
student subject, not English.
in the
class)

TEACHER: Right. Sue, how do you know what you underlined is an adjective clause?

SUE: Because it modifies the noun, Subject.

TEACHER: Good. Now tell me; what part of speech is the word very?
(We studied parts of speech two months ago.)

SUE: It's an adverb.

TEACHER: Right. How do you know that?

SUE: Because it modifies the adjective important.

TEACHER: Good. What kind of adjective is important?

SUE: I don't know.

TEACHER: Minus 5 points. Anybody else?

BOB: (A student in class) It's a predicate adjective because it follows the linking verb is and modifies the subject that.

TEACHER: Very good.

Sue lost 5 points on her sentence. The next nine students lost a total of 21 points, so her class's grade for the day was 74. This was what was written on the chart. This was the score the other classes would try to beat on that day.

At the end of the nine weeks period, the class that has the most points wins the contest, and every person in that class receives extra credit. This is why I stress at the beginning that all students must play the game, even the somewhat lethargic students, because they will receive the extra credit points if they happen to be on the winning team.

The slower students should be told how important they are in this contest. My experience has been that the class that wins usually wins because their "average lazys," my pet name for the slower students, decide to pay attention and do their best on the homework sentences. Also, to be fair, if classes are going to compete, be sure to call similar students to the board; i.e. if three good, four average, and three average lazys are called to the board in one class, the same should be done in all competing classes.

After teaching through the use of the board quiz the necessary constructions needed for good variety in writing, I explain to my students that if their writing lacks smooth style and rhythm, their audience will have to "work" to comprehend the content of their papers; however, when good sentence variety is used, they offer their audience many "mental breaks" or "rests," which makes the papers read with more ease and understanding.

Once the students have learned to write into their paragraphs the various constructions necessary for good sentence variety, a common problem sometimes surfaces. Participial phrases, appositive phrases, adjective clauses, and other important devices are inappropriately used. Students simply write them in, not determining or caring whether they make any sense whatsoever. In these instances, I usually ask the students if they ever have attempted to fit together a multi-pieced puzzle. Most have, so I continue, telling them that when working on such a large puzzle, some impatient people try to force the pieces in, leaving unsightly gaps that distort the beauty of the

finished product. This is much like forcing these constructions of variety into inappropriate places within the paragraph and thereby destroying its effectiveness.

Once the students have learned to write within their papers participial and gerund phrases, adverb and adjective clauses, appositives, and transitional and parenthetical expressions, through traditional grammar study, activities in sentence combining can begin. Students will discover that they really do have a choice and control over the arrangement of their sentences. They discover that one kernel sentence can be converted to one word, phrase, or clause and then be nested inside another sentence squarely between the subject and verb. Constant practice in maneuvering these converted clauses and phrases to the beginning, middle and end of the sentences improves students sentence structure and sentence maturity. Students for the most part enjoy the rearranging activities, and find that their writing becomes smooth and rhythmic.

The procedure for teaching sentence combining is to first introduce new terms to the students. They are not really new, just a different way of presenting basic grammatical terms. For instance, instead of calling sentences simple, we call them "kernel" sentences. Two or more kernels make up a "cluster."

English is my favorite subject.
English is taught by Mrs. Miller.
Mrs. Miller is an excellent teacher.

Instead of using the terms adjective clause or relative pronoun, we simply refer to "wh words" of which by the way that is the "black Sheep." So an activity might be to combine the three above kernels by using "wh words."

English, which is my favorite subject, is taught by
Mrs. Miller, who is an excellent teacher.

In place of appositive phrases, we use the terms "identifying who" and "identifying what" words.

("what" words)
English, my favorite subject, is taught by Mrs. Miller,
an excellent teacher.
("who" words)

Participial phrases are called ing, ed, T, en or N words.

English, taught by Mrs. Miller, is my favorite subject.

Conjunctions, parenthetical words, and transitional words are simply referred to as "glue" words.

English is my favorite subject because it is taught
by Mrs. Miller, an excellent teacher.

I usually make up my own kernels and have the students combine them for homework. There are also many good books out on sentence combining that include various activities and hundreds of clusters with which to work.

The following essays were written in September by two ninth grade English students, before the formal instruction of grammar and sentence combining activities. The students were asked to rewrite the papers seven months later. The topic was to relate in a report to the President of the United States the "national pastime" or some "unusual" aspect of society on another planet visited.

Rod Alfrey 9
Sept. 81

CHOCOLATE PARADISE

Chocolate Paradise is quite a unique place in which people do more or less what turns them on. The people of this world do not have to worry about world problems or anything like that. It's a peace-loving world that no one wants to destroy.

The whole world is just like the United States, but there are no wars. Chocolate Paradise is a nation with no government. There is no crime or vandalism: just a bunch of people who just do what they want. Most of the chocolations love their music and of course their chocolate. There are chocolate factories all over.

The people of Chocolate Paradise do not work if they don't want to. But the work there is like play here, so the chocolations work for the fun of it. But the people in general just have pure wholehearted fun.

Rod Alfrey 9
April 82

CHOCOLATE PARADISE

Chocolate Paradise is quite a unique place where people do more or less what pleases them. The people of this world do not have to worry about world problems or anything like that. It's a peace loving world that no one wants to destroy.

Existence in this place is similar to life in the United States; however, there are no wars. Chocolate Paradise is a nation without any government. There isn't any crime or vandalism, just a society of people who do what they want.

Most of the chocolatans love their music and, of course, their chocolate. Chocolate factories abound as far as the eye can see.

Working on Chocolate Paradise is not a necessity, but is optional for those that have the desire. Chocolatans work for the fun of it; therefore, working is in reality, pleasure. Everyone

on the planet is happy, and petty problems, such as jealousy, greed, and prejudice are not prevalent.

Scott Brockway
Sept. 81

SNOUTBALL

The favorite passtime on the planet Nose is Snoutball. It is a very exciting game, sort of like polo.

The people, called snoses, have very long tube shaped noses. On the end of their nose is a square. The little men ride on the hump of a multi-colored creature. The stubborn beasts they ride have short legs and don't run very fast.

They play in an arena which is about 75 meters long and 25 meters wide. At each end there is a round hole in the wall.

The object of the game is to hit a triangle shaped object with their nose into the circle in the wall. They can not get off of their animal and hit the ball.

The game lasts until someone scores. So far no one has scored. Maybe someday they will figure out that a triangle won't fit in to a circle.

Scott Brockway
April 82

SNOUTBALL

The favorite pastime on the planet Nose is Snoutball. Exciting and fast-paced, the game is played like polo on earth.

The people of Nose, referred to as Snoses, have a nose measuring six feet long which is perfect for playing Snoutball. There are fifteen players on each team. They play in a big ring, something like a bull ring with a triangle shaped hole at each end. The object of the game is to hit a square ball in the holes. The game lasts until someone scores; however, so far they have not figured out that a square will not fit in a triangle.

Lakewood Junior High School
Hebron, Ohio

SEATITUDES OF A FUNDAMENTALIST

by
Rebecca Heaps

I am an English teacher who still marches to a distant tune. I consider myself to be a member of an endangered species; I belong to a vanishing breed. I am shadowed by my fellow language gurus. I am in direct conflict with universities such as Ohio State and Michigan State who proselytize their English teacher trainees for a non-grammar existence. To these language pedagogues the study of grammar is neither beneficial nor essential for our 1980 high school students. Because our young scholars do not find gerunds as entertaining as the Ronald McDonald commercial jingle which they can repeat verbatim, these language experts have adopted this hedonistic philosophy. For them, writing is instead an intuitive educational form. You see, I am a fundamentalist. In the opinion of many, I am old-fashioned and out-of-touch with the reality of the world today. Believing in a strong language foundation, I teach grammar—every intransitive verb and perfect infinitive that exists in our English tongue. I affirm the teaching of spelling—every *ei* when the sound is not long *e*—that emerges from the cloudy maze we fondly regard as a linguistic science. Last but not least to me, but undoubtedly to the horror of those magistrates of English classrooms where the student reigns supreme with his creative journalistic mishmash laden with platitudes, half truths, and untruths, I teach organization and require organization in the written work of my students.

Perhaps, I should place myself in a proper background perspective so that the reader can judge the strength of my professional aptitude. After eight years of teaching high school English, I now teach seventh and eighth grade English. Every August I preside over my classroom domain as twenty-five to thirty sniveling, wide-eyed twelve-and thirteen-year-olds trip clumsily into my pedagogic cubicle leaving overturned desks and unlatched locker doors in their wake. From this area always strewn with "borrowed" kleenex, I must create an order from which I can develop some semblance of verbal and penned proficiency. Each fall I accept my charges—wet behind the ears—still warm from the coddling embraces of their elementary teachers; for these migratory laborers who have been trucked into this adult world exact from me a sense of tutorial steadfastness that forces me to embark upon a course which will take their brains full of mush and fashion gray matter full of logical contemplations. At the close of my first day as protector of the sanctity of learning; I bow my head and allow my shoulders to bend under the magnanimity of the task which lies before me. Like a flea that is lost on the back of an Old English sheepdog, I feel obscured in a tangle of juvenile fallacies and sentiments. Wearily, I stoop to take up the gauntlet and trudge home to set my intellect in order for the ensuing nine months.

Just as the ancient Egyptians constructed their lofty pyramids, so do I struggle with a three-faceted arrangement to create a finished product which will endure not the millions of years that the pyramids have graced the ancient, silicone grains along the Nile but which will endure five, ten, or at the most twenty years. The first facet of my three-sided program is grammar. This grammatical facet of my program is essential for effective written communication. Our composition pupils must know what a participle is before they can add variety to their writing by beginning sentences with participial phrases. A writer cannot be consistent in his use of verb tenses if he does not understand verb tenses. A student can perhaps be trained to write following a variety of sentence patterns. However, without serious language study the young person cannot understand why the various sentence types add variety to his written discourse nor can he comprehend his teacher's written instruction to combine two simple sentences by using a subordinate clause. Asking an individual to improve his writing without a good grammatical background would be like asking a person to build a house without knowing the names of the power tools he is using. Certainly one could construct a house without knowing the proper nomenclature for the tools, but he cannot converse with his occupational peers about their work if he cannot name the implements they use in that work.

Being a fundamentalist, I teach traditional grammar. In my classroom, we inquire into the mysteries of the eight parts of speech. Objective complements and subjective complements both bare their inner-most souls to us. To my students verb tenses are not like the peace of God which passes all human understanding, but these sentence time clocks are friends and allies in forming more accurate penned expressions. We study all aspects of grammar. I do not hold back certain grammatical concepts because they are too difficult for my twelve-year-old charges. I explain and re-explain material that confuses my students. If one approach fails, we re-group and try another method until everyone understands.

Once as a substitute I spent three days with seventh graders teaching quotation marks; we studied all aspects of these punctuation marks. When the regular teacher returned, I explained to her that the students had done poorly on a quiz I had administered; and I suggested that her pupils needed more study with quotation marks. The teacher shrugged her shoulders and told me she would spend no more time with the material because the concepts involved were too difficult for her students. Because she teaches in a suburban school whose students are well-known for their intellectual capabilities, her appraisal was a "cop-out." She refused to cope with the problem and give her students the extra instruction they needed and deserved. Needless to say, I left that substitute assignment feeling very dejected and frustrated. Such a situation never has existed in my classroom; I have taught the unit and my students have learned well.

To help my twelve-year-olds learn about their language, I rely heavily on sentence writing; part of our classroom work involves writing sentences utilizing the grammatical concept we are studying. We work together and have fun enjoying our language with formula sentences at the chalk boards. There is chalk dust on my students' shoulders because they love our board work; they will nearly fall from their desks in an attempt to volunteer in English class. This occurrence is practically an unheard of phenomenon in

many linguistic groups. For us grammar is a game; it is not a classroom exercise during which the learner reads a sentence, identifies one of two words and awaits the teacher's confirmation of the answer's correctness.

However, I would be remiss if I support the premise that school must always be fun. If we adopt this attitude, we do our young people a disservice; for we are preparing them for the real world where Big Bird does not spend his afternoons frolicking in a meadow or where a doctor named Gonzo does not live in a shabby bus spending its deserved retirement in the hospital parking lot. My language neophytes approach grammar as a scientist approaches the problem of acid rain. We examine the theory of sentence structure and apply these abstract principles to groups of words. Our grammatical investigations are drills in critical thinking.

Being a fundamentalist, I am baffled and annoyed by the transformational or structural grammarian. These instructors seem to shun the structural basis of our language. They fear that our young scholars may become bored with traditional language rules. They have created a simplified version of our grammar. But this simplicity is the weakness of the system. Why cannot American students and their teachers accept their own language with its grammatical rules? Why do we constantly try to create new names for principles and concepts which can be easily understood by our pupils if we do a professional job of explaining these principles and concepts? This new nomenclature which is the heart of structural grammar frequently succeeds only in creating confusion for our students. In my classroom I cannot tell my young scholars to have more descriptive noun markers; I would feel foolish giving to my pupils the instruction to vary the sentence completers they use in their compositions. Young Japanese and German students learn both their grammar and our grammar. My junior high school students have pen pals from foreign countries who write in English, but my students do not write in the foreign tongue of their letter friends. If these young people with strange sounding names can learn our language in a few years, why can't our young people learn our language in twelve? The SAT, Scholastic Aptitude Test wants only information about four verb principal parts—not the five claimed by the structural grammarians. We need to stay with the basics and teach grammar—not a new terminology.

The second facet of my nine-month program is composition. The composition methods I use originated with Dr. John Ostrom of Wittenberg University of Springfield, Ohio. Extremely structured, the writing procedure involves a topic sentence with a controlling idea, major statements to support the controlling idea and minor statements to support the major statements. This Ostrom style requires organization and logical supports. My future Ernest Hemingway's can no longer write whatever comes into their minds. They must first make a list of ideas and then create from this list a written discourse ideally well enough organized that it would be fit for presentation in a court room.

I am appalled by my students' inability to reason logically. We as developers of their minds have a responsibility to teach critical thinking skills. The possession of this skill transcends the walls of my English cubicle to the everyday lives of my students and to the future lives of these young people. In my opinion, organization is the foundation for good

writing. If this foundation is built on sand, the structure on the foundation will crumble. However, a good solid base will endure. The similes, the imagery and the illusions all fit neatly into a strong organization. Just as a contractor adds individual variations to his basic structures so can a writer add his frills to his basic composition--after he learns organization.

Many of my English compatriots shudder when I mention organization and a sequential ordering of ideas. They argue that structure limits a young person's ability to express himself with his pen and paper. Instead, for these instructors writing is accomplished only for writing's sake. The idea is to let the ideas flow. In these classrooms the quality of the penned masterpiece is determined by its length. A composition student is said to improve if he can write a full page at the conclusion of his writing instruction. It does not matter that his writings are meaningless jibberish that could just as easily have been written by the student's two-year-old brother. Many instructors feel that marking a sentence fragment or a run-on sentence on a composition is an invasion of the student's civil liberties. Forcing a student to think about the correct spelling of words when he writes is to these authorities the cruelest form of child abuse. But I say that these self-appointed masters are themselves guilty of abusing their students; they have snatched the right to a good education from the hands of the young persons in their care. Business cannot progress if its reports are streams of conscience expressions that would make a dolphin cringe. How can new products be developed if the reports explaining their construction are not clearly written and logically explained? The field of medicine would have stagnated with the use of blood letting to heal the body if medical journals were not filled with responsible, accurate accountings of health-bringing work.

Recently, a seventh grader presented me with a written work on the Super Bowl in which he contended that the Oakland Raiders played a unique football game. He supported his proposition by referring to Oakland's new offensive plays. He neglected to mention what the offensive plays were or how they led to the scoring by the Raiders, but he did inform me that the team did not practice the new plays until the week of the big game. Not only did he use this weak support but he also failed to relate it to his topic of a unique game. He could have discussed the quality of the offensive plays and the effect these new strategies had on the defensive unit. Writing of this quality would certainly not earn my student a place on any newspaper staff. By demanding organization instead of just allowing a free-flow of words, I am providing my pupils the skills they need to survive in our dynamic world. Our televisions and telephones of today may one day be museum exhibits, but critical thinking and organized writing will never be outdated in an organized society.

For the reader's information my major organized compositions are three to four pages in length. I spend one full week pre-conferencing with the students before they turn in their written work. So that I can remain fresh and keep my perspective, I only grade five compositions a day. After the grading is complete, I post-conference with my young writers about their compositions. This time is important because they have an opportunity to ask me questions. I have my fledgling authors make a written summary of

the comments I made about their writing. These records are used to help them avoid their same mistakes in the next writing assignments. I mark all spelling errors. In the second semester and after careful classroom study, I give my seventh graders an automatic C if they include a run-on sentence or sentence fragment in their written work. This policy carries through for my eighth grade classes. This grading may seem harsh, but the automatic C is effective, for I have few papers with English sentence culprits.

My students do not like to write compositions, but they know how to compose a generally well-ordered discourse on paper. After all, isn't this the goal of instructors of writing? Who among us really loves to write? My young people know how to find a writing topic; they have a skeleton on which to hang their ideas and information. Unlike the baby struggling to take his first step, they do not grope clumsily through the writing process. They even possess a great awareness of the quality of their own compositions; they know if they have done well or if they have done poorly.

The third facet of my program which completes my pyramid is rapport I have with every young person in my classroom. I always try to treat them courteously; I recognize that they are human beings with rights and feelings that deserve consideration. My students have to earn my respect, but they always have my courteous consideration. Because I teach in a small rural school, I know my pupils, usually I know their brothers and sisters, and often I know their parents. Because I am aware of the value and priority system within the families, I can more easily find the right methods to motivate these adolescents to perform well in school. Also once again, because I do know my students' families, those young persons who sit in my English class believe that I care about them and accept what I am teaching as beneficial to them.

My beatitudes are complete. This fundamentalist has concluded her message. I may be part of a vanishing, endangered species at war with various groups; but I am at peace with myself. I believe I am a professional who does her job well. I feel that what I am teaching is what needs to be taught. Whether the reader accepts my beatitudes is not my concern; my concern is that everyone has his own beatitudes. If two English teachers or five hundred English teachers were placed in a room, reaching a one-hundred percent agreement on a specific course of study would never be realized; however, English teachers should at least agree on the concept of bringing a student's talents to complete fruition.

Alexandria School
Alexandria, Ohio

WRITE IN STYLE: IMITATING THE MASTERS

by
Cindy Kelley

What do you do with student writing that is lifeless and stiff? Oh, I've tried journal writing and free writing exercises to help students loosen up their style and to find their "voice," and maybe I didn't give these approaches enough time, but I found after a month that my students didn't like what they had written, and neither did I...More dry wood.

I tried imitation writing exercises in my junior American Literature class and was delighted with the results. Art students imitate the master artists; what not have students of writing imitate the great writers? Students are able to see the effect of word choice, sentence type, and imagery on the tone and meaning of the writing. What is more exciting, however, is the enjoyment and the confidence they discover to experiment with their own style. Style before imitating was something abstract, ambiguous, and rarely thought about. After becoming intimate with styles of other authors through close analysis and imitation, the students have an increased awareness of style, of others and their own. The gradual process of discovering their own voice in writing begins.

I recommend the book *PROCESS AND THOUGHT IN COMPOSITION* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980, Winthrop Publishers, Inc., p. 427) by Frank J. D'Angelo for ways to analyze writing for imitation, and examples of essays and their imitations. The basic steps to successful imitations from D'Angelo's book are copied below:

- 1) Select a short passage from a writer's work that seems to have excellencies of style and that seems to be relatively complete in itself.
- 2) Read the model carefully, preferably aloud at first to get the full impact, in order to get the overview of the dominant impression.
- 3) Analyze the model carefully, noting the sentence length, the sentence types, and the word choice.
- 4) Then either do a close or loose imitation of the model by selecting a subject that differs from the model's but is suitable for treatment in the model's style.

I suggest that the first thing you teach the students how to do is to identify sentence types: the basic sentence patterns, the expansion through modification and substitution, coordination, and cumulative sentences. Also the students need to understand the differences between the denotative and connotative meanings of words, and the obvious and subtle use of figurative

language in writing before beginning to analyze a writing model. After selecting a writing model, analyze it using the basic steps with the whole class. At first I had to ignore my students incredulous looks and comments when I introduced the "new" approach. I advise you to ignore them too, because once my students put pen to paper to begin their imitation, there were no more complaints. The students imitated Mark Twain, Eudora Welty, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and Katherine Anne Porter. Here are some samples of their work:

Imitation of "The Farn" by Mark Twain

by Matthew Held

As I have said, I spent most of my summer working in the restaurant right until the day vacation ended. The life which I led there with my friends and superiors was full of charm and so is the memory of it yet. I can call back the busy nights and the mystery of what I was missing up front, the tantalizing smells, the faint odor of tomato sauce, the sheen of newly washed dishes, the rattling clatter of pizza pans when one was taken from the oven, the far-off hammering of the cash register, and the muffled call of a waitress yelling for glasses up front from the remoteness of the dining room, and the glimpse of disturbed customers after dropping a stack of salad bowls—I can call it all back and make it as real as it ever was, and as blessed. I can call back the front, and its business and clamor, and Steve Brown standing motionless in front of the oven with a pizza spatula in hand with the flames of the oven behind him, making him look like the devil. I can see the staff in the Villa dress, the hiking boots, the baseball caps, and the aprons stained with pizza sauce, and I can hear the rustle of a paper bag made by Bob as he prepares another carryout order. I can see the brown cluster of pepperoni amongst the mushrooms and the sausage and I remember the taste of them, and the smell. I know how the hot heroes looked, and how they tasted; and the same with the veal, the ribs, and the pasta; and I can feel the spray of the dishwasher in my face as we tried to get caught up on the dishes and Jimmy, the retarded bus-boy, would send down dish tubs full of chicken bones, and the waitresses's tips. I know the stain of spaghetti sauce and how pretty it is, and I know the stain of bleach, and what it does to bluejeans, and also what grudging experience I had with both of them. I know the taste of Miller beer after the Villa is closed and how to open a bottle with one hand, and how to chug the brew, and how much better bottled Miller tastes than Miller in cans, let hapless fools say what they will.

LIFE IN THE MINOR SEMINARY

by Joseph M. Lamphere

Imitation of first two paragraphs of Hemingway's short story "In Another Country"

During the school year homework was always there, but I did not do it anyway. I was constantly yawning and fell asleep often.

After the bell rang at 3:02 I was allowed outside to catch a few hours of enjoyment. There was a wide variety of things to do after school, but my time was limited. There was a cabin close by that was private and a person could be free from worry there. Most of the time I sat around and did things I wasn't allowed to do. This did not cure my chronic yawning and the homework still came in droves.

I was in the study hall during the evenings. I had plenty of ways to stay out of sight at these times and do nothing. All the ways I won't talk about, but they worked. The study hall air had a quality about it that reminded me of the dorm in the middle of the night. I sat at a desk all the time and did nothing, even though I had a ton of homework. Despite the homework I still put my head on my desk and snored away.

Imitation of a section of Eudora Welty's short story "A Worn Path"

by Joseph Farrand

Throwing his withered hands out, he broke the fall, and shut his eyes. Lifting his head, brushing the sand gently from it, like a rat washing its muzzle, he began to stand. He then opened his eyes, and was safely on his feet.

"This isn't as easy as I thought," he panted.

But he sat down to rest. He laid the empty canteen on the ground beside him and spread his hands over his face. Barely shading him was a cactus with its foreboding barricade of quills. He did not dare to close his eyes, and when a little stream brought him a chance of drinking and filling his canteen from it, he thought to himself, "That would be acceptable." But when he went to take some, there were just his own hands in the sand.

So he left that cactus, and had to go over a great many dunes. Soon he had to creep and crawl, moving his knees, and digging his fingers in the sand like a dead man grasping for his only hope. But he talked loudly to himself: he could not let his will be torn now, so far on the journey, and he could not pay for his life or soul if he would die where he was.

At last he was safe through the journey and risen up out of the desert. Big sun-bleached trees, like hands reaching to heaven, were standing in the purple light of the setting sun. There perched a buzzard.

After five imitations the students truly learn what style is and what makes style, something that could not have been absorbed in a class discussion on the topic. With the new found confidence in their own writing ability, the students are interested in analyzing more styles and in experimenting and analyzing their own writing style.

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STUDENTS CAN WRITE RIGHT

by
Susan L. Sherhag

As a product of the '60's educational system, I have always felt inadequate as a teacher of writing and grammar. Consequently, I always approach writing with a great deal of trepidation and am constantly trying new ideas hoping that something will work and be effective. I have always enjoyed creative writing and find that I meet with the most success in that class.

My creative writing class is composed of 25 juniors and seniors. The class is eighteen weeks long and is offered only once per year. I generally divide the class curriculum into four different sections, each covering a specific genre. The genre discussed are: essay, poetry, short story and play. My goal with this class is to provide an atmosphere wherein the students get a chance to write frequently and to write without fear of criticism on their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Three of the most successful projects this year were: poetry, children's stories and the final exam! I would like to share some of the students' writings with the reader, not because I felt that I did such a good job but rather that the students wrote so well.

In poetry, as in all exercises, I write along with the students. We discuss the following types of poetry: diamante, 5-step, haiku, tanka, cinquain, limerick, epitaph, villanelle and the sonnet. As a final project, each student has to turn in 50 lines of original poetry. I find that starting out with the diamante and 5-step serves as a means of proving to the students that they can write poetry! I find that many students end up writing excellent poetry and I am surprised at the sophistication of their work. Below are some of my personal favorites.

Old Man

People! Who needs 'em?!
Surely not me!
Gabbing and grabbing they all want to see
Who's gonna win and who's gonna lose
Bury their troubles in a bottle of booze.

I know that I'm old and ready to die
But please tell all people to remember me by
Not the riches I had nor the parties I threw
But of the knowledge I had of the people I knew.

--Tony

Untitled

The cold winter wind whips at our faces
 The house left behind was cozy and warm
 Now we travel to some unknown places
 To look for shelter away from the storm.

Snowflakes fall heavily onto the ground
 Within the deep woods the wind does not fight
 The wind through the trees makes a howling sound
 We'll reach our destiny before the night.

In the distance ahead is a cabin
 Lighted windows through the snow barely shine
 There will be a place for us to sleep in
 And a table with food where we can dine.

The people inside are friendly and good
 And the fireplace burns brightly with wood.

—Laura

Untitled

I am an observer
 Watching the sunset drift into the horizon
 Listening to the birds sing their sweet lullabies
 I scrutinize the animals as they scurry to their homes
 Before the coming night

Dancing lightly, the butterflies flutter to the birds' drowsy songs
 The dew, sparkling on the green velvet leaves
 Looks like diamonds in the last rays of light
 The statuesque trees stand on the horizon with their branches
 Outreaching to the heavens
 Bowing their heads wearily
 The flowers prepare for the coming of the night

I am a watcher of the coming night.

—Deb

Another project we all enjoyed was writing children's short stories. Since the project was due before Christmas, the books were given to the children of the faculty members for Christmas.

Each story had to be in a book-form and illustrated. The cover of each was laminated. Much to my surprise, not one student refused to do the project.

Mrs. Judith Keck from the Licking County Schools, spent one class showing students various ways to illustrate their books without needing great artistic talent.

There were two major problems with the project. I feel that too much time (three weeks) was spent during class on the project. With all of that time, several students still turned the project in late! Also, even though I strongly suggested that I proofread rough drafts before the final story was put with the illustrations, many students chose to rely on their own skills; consequently many books were filled with errors and the over-all effect of their stories was lessened.

In virtually every instance, the illustrations were an integral part of the story. The impossibility of reproducing the stories with illustrations prevents their inclusion within the text of this paper.

I feel that the project was successful because the students had an opportunity to write, illustrate, edit and publish something from beginning to end. Even with high school students, there seems to be a great deal of pride in having something concrete to show after a lot of hard work.

Some of the best student writing showed up on the final exam. The students were given six topics from which to choose and were asked to develop the topic using any of the four genre' discussed in class. Students had fifty-five minutes to complete their work. I had never used this type of final exam and was pleasantly pleased with the results.

Preppiness

Preppiness is a new pair of jeans
Worn so tight they'll rip at the seams.
Preppiness is an izod shirt
To match your Gloria Vanderbilt skirt.
Preppiness is spend lots of money
Just to please their preppy honies.
Preppiness is in the air with your rose
Preppiness is a new style of clothes
Preppiness is a weird-looking tie
Its cut off at the bottom, I wonder why?

Preppiness is what is going around
But I thank God it hasn't hit my town.

I'll never be preppy, I simply refuse.
I'd rather be me and wear what I choose.

I'll stay in my town, on my own ground
'Cause this is where there are no preps around.

Then one day a prep came to school
Everyone laughed and called him a fool.

After a while that he had been here
I started to notice some changed, I feared.

All of a sudden I saw preppy pants
Around the halls in them they'd prance.

Now as I feared all of our schools
Are walking around looking like preppy fools, including me.

--Tammy

"Let's Party"

Back street in a big city
when everywhere could
be heard
Baby you just "Dial M for Murder"
and boy, ain't we gonna
give pigs come boogie-woogie

Was it the youngster
from Sesame Street
that stuck the knife
to the hands of helpless
crying, "My emotions, you see!"
He who in the elementary
got a present from friends
"The care and feeding of a 'teacher's pet'"

The firesouls mixed
bloodmarks to the walls
fill in the blanks
you kings of the ghettos

I really love...
hot pants

All the fiends buried
by the hands of the highest
engravings asking who do
"I really Hate?"
Ask them what
preppiness
intelligents is...

--Lina

The topic of discussion today is that rare "bird", the teacher's pet. Found anywhere that an institution of learning exists, I doubt that these creatures will ever be on the endangered species list. Beginning early in life at the age of one or two (that's five or six for you and me), these docile animals begin their training. Taking milk money to the office and passing out cookies after mid-day recess are preliminary tests to get a scope of the subject's aptitude for the position. The top candidates are weeded out and sent on to first or second grade. The unfortunate ones who are not picked are finely diced and made into fruit salade'.

Here, in the stage of training known as paper passing pre-testing, the p.p. (potential pet) is just learning how to read. What better way to let

him show his skills and adeptness than to let him pass back school papers. Some slower prodigies are still permitted to take lunch and milk money to the office. Also, the first signs of having one's desk next to the teacher's begin to creep up. Along down the road in fourth, fifth and sixth grade these forementioned skills are probed into somewhat more deeply. Also new functions are taught such as being the line leader and special privileges such as turning on the traffic light are introduced.

Seventh grade causes problems for many pets in that more than one teacher needs to be brown nosed. Only top quality prospects make it through Junior High Years unscathed. Marking and playing goody-to-shoes are dominant factors in a "pets" survival. These skills develop as some students begin to smoke in the bathroom, skip class and talk in study hall. But keep in mind, very few p.p.'s are still passing out papers. Those that do are shoe-ins for high school "pet" greatness. Also preliminary office worker and general office brown nosing begin in this time. Some students are more advanced and can handle up to two periods a day in the office. These "pets" also have "pet" greatness written all over them.

As high school rolls around clique forming becomes crucial. If one is not in the "In" group, forget it. Even Junior High School Hall of Fame Petters have fallen from good grades by clique clashing. But the sophisticated and advanced petologist has the situation well under control. He or she is still passing out papers, works in the office and has multiple personalities to be able to get along with all the teachers.

The sad side of this story is even though many "pets" graduate with honors and continue on through college, an alarming rate drop out of sight after high school. Unemployment among former "pets" is a staggering 63.7% for last year and all indicators point to that rate increasing within a year or two. It is noted however that 48% of the U.S. Congress were former "pets" (and I guess that's why you have to brown nose to bear the system) but as for the vast majority who waste away, new self-help centers are being set up. Former "pets" are actually being taught to read and to feed themselves. It is slow going though and funds are limited. That is why, as a preventative measure, this month has been claimed "beat your favorite pet to death month."

--Tony

Considering the time element for writing on the spur of the moment, I was greatly pleased by the variety of writing styles and skills displayed on the exams. I enjoyed reading these exams and was surprised by the views expressed by those examples included.

After being part of the Licking County Writing Project, I decided to take an idea from the meetings and try it with my sophomores. Because any writing assignment over one page seems to be an insurmountable project, I decided to have the classes write short stories in groups of five or six. This project was the culmination of four weeks of reading short stories and two weeks spent on basic writing skills.

I let the students pick their own groups after I had chosen the group leaders. Each group then chose, at random, plot, setting, climax and theme cards. Using these, each group had five days to complete a short story. There were specific assignments to turn in daily; this was a means of seeing that work was going forward!

I found that this technique was successful once I, as the teacher, overcame my qualms about grading group papers. I was pleasantly surprised by the caliber of their work and all of the students enjoyed hearing the stories read aloud in the classroom. Even though there was a great deal of complaining about the assignment initially, the students became involved with the challenge of creating a story out of the set of cards that they had chosen to work with.

The stories ranged from an eyewitness account of a prison riot to murder in a fun house to a story about a gang called the Hellians! The stories all contained the elements discussed in the classroom as well as dialogue, good characterization and lots of action!

Out of two classes, only one student refused to participate in the project. I feel that this was a project that was entertaining for the students yet provided a meaningful writing experience for everyone involved.

Through the Licking County Writing Project, I have developed more confidence in myself as a teacher of writing. I have tried various techniques and students seem to sense that and were willing to go along with me and have fun with their writing. Their writing seems to be more creative and that is my goal as a teacher.

Lakewood High School
Hebron, Ohio

DON'T GRADE THAT PAPER...

by
Karen Puckett

...especially if your past experiences with the teaching of composition are similar to mine.

When I first began teaching composition, I was concerned about the grade I would affix to each paper. I took great pains to reassure myself that based on the errors made, the appointed grade was a fair one. My post-writing emphasis was on improving the grade, and while wallowing in the ignorance that comes with inexperience, I did not anticipate that the students post-writing emphasis would be the grade and the grade only. After all, I had edited the paper as well as graded it. But there was no concern for the errors made. There was no attempt at improvement. The students were not aware of any phase of composition other than the grade. According to them, once the grade was received the assignment was complete. No carry-over existed.

I cringed when students wadded up their papers after taking in that grade. Seldom did I see a student reviewing a paper for editorial comments. But, my frustration was not futile, it led to change.

One of the main concerns throughout the teaching of composition should be improvement and in my class the focus has become exactly that. As a class we are using a number of methods to maintain that focus on improvement.

To begin, we widened the audience. Now, the students are writing for each other, as well as for their teacher. This has made a tremendous difference. I was surprised at how concerned students become about their ability to communicate when they realized that their peers were to become the audience. They began to take more care and pride in the way they fashioned their writing.

Along with widening the audience, I have employed a large number of part-time editors, again, the students. Editing each other's papers has proven to be a worthwhile experience. They have become more aware of the mistakes their classmates and themselves make. The comments made during editing sessions illustrate that learning is taking place.

After the papers are presented to an audience, edited and rewritten or editings corrected, they are placed in the student's file. It is this file as a whole that receives a grade. The grade is based on the prompt completion of the assignments and if the assignment reflects a lack of effort, the grade is adjusted accordingly. Based on this method, every student can be successful. Both my students and I have found that this method encourages both writing and the improvement of writing.

However, the students did experience a difficult transition period. They had been programmed to expect a grade on each paper. At first the lack of a grade was interpreted as a lack of value. This frustrated everyone, students and teacher. But, with a maintained emphasis on sharing their writing, editing and subsequent corrections, they began to see that there was still value placed on the assignment.

Once the students realized that they would not be penalized for the sum of their written errors, their writing fears were alleviated. Thus we have increased the opportunity for freedom of expression and experimentation.

It has been a struggle for all of us involved in this experience, but the students have come to understand that the manner in which they express themselves is more important than the grade.

Utica High School
Utica, Ohio

LOST AT "C" -- SAILING THROUGH WRITING

by
T. Allen Priest

"I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas."¹

Friends, roamers, and correctionists, lend me your oars! Assist me to paddle this rowboat of thought through an ocean of words. This emoceanal voyage will not last as long as that of the schoolmaster who took leave of his charges who couldn't shape up, so he shipped out on the Pequod. The fact that he was the sole survivor of that epic chase demonstrates in general the survivability of anyone who teaches writing.

What is it that we are going to pursue? Part of the catch has already been brought back to port: we instructors of writing know that if a student has a water-tight paragraph on which to hoist his sail of experience, then our function as instructors is to provide some wind (or hot air). The other part of the catch (22, perhaps) of composition lies before us in the murky depths: how do we encourage a landlubbing novice to sail through writing when his craft is leaky?

Since we composition teachers are all in the same dingy (condition), we might just as well relax. I don't propose to take our craft into deep waters; instead, we'll hug the shallows where near the shore of mutual concerns we can better see my ebb (mostly) and flow of thought. By doing this, we can feel secure and not get lost on the sea of composition. The best advice any instructor of writing can receive is this: **FIRST, COMPOSE YOURSELF.**

Since Homer first sailed a perfumed sea, no matter how darkened it may have been for him, writers have used the sea to explain their love/hate relationship with their craft. It took Odysseus ten years to get home from Troy; I wonder if it took the blind Homer that long to write this first odyssey. In our native language, which is ever-changing like the sea itself, the premier vessel of significance is "The Seafarer." That "weary wayworn wanderer" Edgar Allan Poe uses the love/hate relationship with his recurring theme of the death of a beautiful woman in "Annabelle Lee": the beloved is entombed in a sepulchre by the sea. The raven wafts in to his chamber from "the night's Plutonian shore" with news of the lost Lenore. The death of a beautiful woman seems to be the la mer of his invention. Again in a "W. Found in a Bottle" Poe uses the sea as a whirlpool to oblivion; these doubts are re-echoed in "A Descent into the Maelstrom." It would be helpful if all writers had the same positive attitude about their craft that John Masefield expresses in "Sea Fever." Such is not the case with most of the language-locked reluctant writers who anchor themselves in our classroom and harbor doubts about their writing ability.

From Narcissus to Henry David Thoreau and beyond, the writer has reflected his concerns about writing—in water. Is it any wonder that in Thomas Mann's *DEATH IN VENICE*, the narrator is carried through the canals in a "coffin-black" gondola? Is it surprising that in Theodore Dreiser's 874 page *AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY*, the focal point is an overturned rowboat? Is it ironic that in Ernest Hemingway's *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA* the old codger has a relatively easy trip but has only a shark-eaten fish to show for all his efforts? Does it amaze you that in *CANTO I* Ezra Pound's persona goes down to the sea and by *CANTO 95* is as water-logged as the reader? The incurably romantic F. Scott Fitzgerald has his alter ego narrator at the end of *THE GREAT GATSBY* expressing perhaps a doubt about his subsequent writing career when he says,

"So we beat on, boats against the current,
borne ceaselessly into the past."

A writer who used his past as well as anyone else was Samuel Clemens. Taking the name "Mark Twain" was no fluke for someone who was aware of the depth his craft took him. In the classic *ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN* Mark Twain expresses this love/hate relationship with his craft. Huckleberry Finn (a fish steering mechanism) tries to steer a raft down the "Mighty Muddy" in a fog. Although Twain's writing was as rough-hewn as the raft, it was hard for him to navigate entirely in one direction. The later works of Samuel Clemens, which don't rely heavily on his past, appear to have been written in Clemens' fog about life and humanity. Is it any wonder that we as composition teachers have a major difficulty ahead of us in dealing with our students who are amateurs when the professionals themselves have had their doubts? What do we do with those who have yet to get their "C" (sea/composition) legs? (See the opening quotation again!)

By looking at three acclaimed writers who actually had "sealegs" before they began writing, we should be better able to see what these fears are.

First of all, Herman Melville in his epic non-adventure novel (very novel, indeed), *MOBY-DICK*, shows a monomaniac Ahab travelling all the seas (and all writing styles, thanks to Ishmael—the writer as social outcast) to harpoon that great white whale who had earlier dismasted him. When Ahab lands his catch, the whale takes him down below "the great shroud of the sea." This may have subconsciously prophesied Melville's own submerged reputation after the book was an outcast in literary circles. In a story "Bartleby the Scrivener," written not long after this, the material is not the sea at all but a law-copyist (writing again, see!) who "prefers not to" write. The fear of students may be not just the great white blank page but also the idea of being a social outcast. At the end of his writing career, Melville writes in *BILLY BUDD* of an innocent who is forced to serve in the navy, is maligned by a evil Claggart, is sentenced by a just man, and is hanged at the yardarm, becoming a saint for other—in his death: what every composition teacher wants his student writers to know, huh?

Secondly, Joseph Conrad, a native of Poland, went to England and worked his way up to captain, retired to write in the language he had to learn: English. From the titles of his works alone we get an array of suggestions

about the writer as sailor. A writer is a secret sharer. A writer often is a secret agent. A writer may become an outcast of the islands. A writer may endure a typhoon of criticism. A writer may have to reveal his own heart of darkness for the purpose of getting a story. A writer seldom has a victory. Basically, the writer has a responsibility to his audience as did Lord Jim: if the writer abandons his leader in mid-voyage then the writer gets lost at composition as well. The fear of students may be not this idea of losing an audience in mid-stream of consciousness as much as it may be facing the truth about oneself.

Thirdly, Eugene O'Neill shipped out to many different ports of call for therapeutic reasons. As a writer, O'Neill was innovative and experimental in the various directions his drama took. The poetic brother who did not go to sea (or write poetry as was his intention) dies a failure in BEYOND THE HORIZON. In ANNA CHRISTIE the sea captain refers to that "Ole devil sea." One might cite the early sailing stories collected in THE LONG VOYAGE BOIE or the autobiographical work in which an O'Neill-type character learns he needs a sea voyage for his tuberculosis, LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, to show Eugene O'Neill's (and most writers') contempt for the time it takes to complete a draft (sailing again, see?). The fear of students may not be the count of time it takes as much as the devilish trial of committing oneself clearly in words. After all, it took Marcel Proust seven volumes to go in search of lost time (A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU) and from what I was able to understand he had a rough way (SWANN'S, GURMANTES) of it.

If I had a sure-fire way of expunging (or ex-sponging) these fears and doubts, I would hoist it to you. I see our role as composition teachers as the lighthouse keepers on the shore of composition. We are there stately and tall, gleaming brightly to clarify the darkness, to provide a seaworthy craft, and to blow our foggy horns to make them feel a little more secure of their navigation. Each student writer must man his own boat alone, hoist his own sail, and then go where his inspiration takes him. As composition teachers, we should make him aware of a few things.

First of all, just as the boat has to be pushed into the water—it can't hug the shoreline and get out to sea—so must the student at first indent. This act has a psychological importance. On his paper, the left hand margin represents the voluntary aspect of the writing process: the margins are used for teacher comments. The student should push away from this shoreline even though he will be coming back to it. In a basic sense, the student begins with a blank anyhow; he doesn't know exactly what to say. Some may call this one small leap for "writingkind" because it does represent the initial thrust of the writer's separation from the teacher. In another sense, student observation of the red margin line may represent the writer's selectivity with his own material: on the left side of the red line are the left overs, which he chooses to exclude; on the right side of the red line are the write-ons, which he chooses to include. Others prefer not to go beyond their grandmaman's saying: INDENT and OBSERVE MARGINS.

Secondly, just as the thought or idea initiates from whatever substance appears on the blue cap of a ball point pen and is transferred by salivation

of the writer and lodges under his thinking cap, so should the initial wave of thought begin with a capital letter. The capital might anchor the flow of words across the page. In addition, the capital might serve also to show how many knots (look at a student's handwriting closely and note loopholes as well) one idea may have covered. Since some students are not quite at the sailing stage (have them read a Faulknerian fragment or a Henry James sentence), a capital might be considered as splashes made by the oar into the sea of thought. The word "capital" is most appropriate to describe one of many punishments we correctionists can scourge upon the pirated writer; however, this punitive measure proves to be self-inflicted when we strictly adhere to the grey-haired grammarian's code of honor: EACH SENTENCE MUST BEGIN WITH A CAPITAL LETTER. This has become a natural response for all evaluators: skeptics, when was the last time you rewarded a student with an "A+" rather than the flashier scarlet letter "A?"

A third commandment from the little old lady chiseling the tablets on Mount Simus is THOU SHALL WRITE IN SENTENCES. (Being of sound syntax and coherent body, I am convinced that the official residence and headquarters of that retired English teacher is a remodelled institute of correction). The word "sentence" sounds so punitive to some: are we composition counselors or writing wardens? Just as a prisoner, so often in solitary confinement, must serve his time, thinking through his escape plan, so must a writer spend his time, thinking through his "thought-escape" plan. As the novice writer takes leave from shore, he innocently sallies forth to free from his own cerebral prison a feeling or perception (sentence from the Latin sentire: to feel, perceive) which stretches itself out in a wave of blue ink, basking in the open waters.

To assure himself that each individual thought makes a point, the writer places a dot at the end of the wave of blue ink. Looking at the small round dot closely, the excited god-like writer perceives his creation: out of a void he has created something of cosmic proportions though now just a minute symbol of his microcosmic experience. From an unknown source comes an articulate yet unmistakable voice, "I AM PLEASED THAT THOU HATH OBEYED THE FOURTH OF MY COMMANDMENTS: THOU SHALL USE END PUNCTUATION."

Pleased with having done so well, the writer liberates a thought that had shared a previous cell in the brain near the one now paroled. Each thought finds itself a space; thoughts allied in cerebral confinement are now following one another. The writing of one sentence began in deliberation; the writing of the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth is true liberation. LIBERTY! EQUALITY! FRATERNITY! As the writer puts wave after wave of thought down, he finds himself floating his craft. The more he writes, the more he feels "C" worthy. Once he has logged all similar thoughts, feelings, perceptions, he realizes what he has displayed. He smiles. He has strictly obeyed the fifth commandment: THOU SHALL HAVE PARAGRAPH UNITY.

At this point the small secure craft surges through the waves, moving rapidly across the water, his sail billowing in the breeze. No longer is he "a painted ship on a painted ocean"—this is the real thing! During the long voyage out, he acknowledges the other commandments in stride under his sail: CHANGE PARAGRAPHS WHEN CHANGING COURSE; BE SPECIFIC; PROOFREAD; REVISE;

VARY YOUR SENTENCES. As the frothy waves grow higher and the writer's craft eases beyond the horizon, we wait with anticipation, until his long voyage home is over and he docks his cargo with us who remained ashore.

Any student making it this far has proved his composition-legs. Baptized in writing, he no longer is a land-lubber. As long as his craft stays afloat, he will be above "C" level in his evaluation. From us he takes his bearings, but he must navigate on his own. Should the Sirens of enthusiasm overload his craft, he will probably return with only a dampened sail of personal experience which must be wrung out and dried before he is able to unfurl it to the breeze in a safer dingy.

Sailing through writing can be a rewarding—not punishing—experience if we as instructors don't get lost at sea ourselves. We must compose ourselves first. We must recognize the difficulties that writers may have with their craft. We must provide a safe harbor at all times. We must clarify the darkness of voyager's-writer's. We must be willing to exercise our authority as composition correctionists: hopefully, if we provide him with instructions for a water-tight paragraph, then we won't be later inundated ourselves, wriggling on a pen of correction and drowning in a sea of paper-work. Lastly, on a personal note, my bows are stern for T. Stearns Eliot who prophesied what each composition teacher should learn about his own role in the student writing process:

"I am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous--
Almost at times, the Fool."²

When the student writer hoists his sail of self-confidence, we as composition counselors provide the necessary wind of conferencing to encourage him onward. Walt Whitman best expressed this encouragement:

"The untold want of life and land ne'er granted
Now, voyager, go thou forth to seek and find."

Notes

Quotations taken from "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" appeared in T.S. Eliot. THE COLLECTED POEMS. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963.

¹ Lines 73-75.

² Lines 112-119.

3 X 5: NOT TOO SMALL AT ALL!

by
JUDITH KECK

Among the many presentations, discussions, and activities of the Licking County Writing Project, we completed a 3x5 writing process exercise. It was adapted from a presentation by Paul Escholtz, University of Vermont, at a Writing Conference sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education in Columbus, Ohio, May 1981.

The objectives of this exercise are to 1) experience the writing process and 2) to "try on" conferencing as a teaching technique. Participants use five 3x5 index cards to prewrite, write, revise, and edit. Following each draft, participants hold a conference in pairs and role play both the teacher/reader and student/writer roles.

Although the exercise takes only 1 hour, participants felt good about their writings and some have agreed to share.

Life becomes richer when filled with laughter. Terry is my laughter -- my life. He is intelligent, kind, sincere, and even serious when the occasion calls for such...but it's the echoes of his laughter I recall as sleep comes at the end of a day spent together. I remember the look of warmth in his dark, brown eyes...hear again the heartiness of his laughter in jest and fun...and know what it is to feel really alive with the excitement of life. Yes, I'm very rich...for I have Terry and his laughter...that's life!

Kathy R. Stroh

A giggle is a soft, bubbling sound coming from deep in the throat. That giggle can grow until it is a full-fledged laugh that comes from the tips of the toes. The laugh can infect those around the laugher and will grow into a roar. This roar can represent a friendship, a camaraderie, a sign of love or just a relaxing moment in the passing minutes of one's life.

A. Phillips

To many, Lucerne means resplendent scenery, the best possible watches, and great chocolate! To me, Lucerne conjures up an image of thirty-five high school students and my mom doing the "goose step"

across the world famous covered bridge!

An evening of beer, wine, cheese, songs and fun had left these "partiers" full of "joie de vivre" and not content to merely walk back to their hotel - and bed! Luckily, one "inspired" chaperone organized the new step and my mother was the first to join in!

The mental image, even five years later, brings a smile to my face. I have but one regret - my mom drank my wine and I was cold sober - an observer rather than a participant!

Susan Sherhag

The Curse of Being Vocal in a Room of Silence

Teachers' meetings are for me often frustrating sessions of non-communication. Thirty stolid teachers stare at the blackboard above the principal's head while he drones on. Teachers, reverting to student behavior, become restless. Notes are written and giggles surface. I listen. I am full of words. They tumble out when I least expect. "No, I do not agree! What are you talking about?" In spite of my good intentions not to talk, not to initiate or dominate discussion, not to receive the weary glances of the male staff, I cannot restrain myself. My ideas conflict and wrestle with others' opinions. We talk them out into the open. If no one else will communicate, I will.

B. Whyte

Walls, Parlez-Vous?

"Si les murs pourraient parler!" is a phrase often seen in Quebec City's travel brochures. "If the walls could speak!" I know of one house whose walls could speak of several disasters that befell two small-town college girls studying in that city during the summer of 1970.

From day one of our Quebec experience, Sharon and I got into scrapes. The university lost my registration papers; consequently, I was two hours late taking the proficiency test. We returned home to find a note scribbled by the host family saying they'd see us in two weeks - some host! The first day of classes found us searching for the right bus to make the two-mile journey to campus. Later in the term, we returned at 2 a.m. from a school-sponsored excursion to discover that the city busses stopped their routes at midnight, the dorm officials wouldn't let us stay overnight on campus and we were again searching for a way to cover those two miles between home and school. We did manage that problem but returned home to find a dark, empty and unlocked apartment, thanks once more to our host family, who stayed home less than their two boarders!

Sharon and I managed to fall into other predicaments in those eight unforgettable weeks, some minor, some record-breakers. But we returned home basically safe and sane, having matured and grown in confidence through our trials. Nevertheless, we hope those walls

keep their memories to themselves.

Beth Lane

My dog Bo is waiting as I remove my shoes before going to bed. He's quietly moved in from his pillow in the corner and is ready with tender teeth to gently tug the toe of my sock as soon as my shoe is removed. Whimpering, he takes them to his bed and tries to hide them in the folds of his pillow.

"Hey, Bo! What are you doin' with my socks?"

He grabs them and races out of reach.

An open closet door is an invitation to gather more. Socks only; never underwear. I looked the other day and he had three pair tucked under his body.

"Hey, Bo! My feet really smell that good? What're you thinking when you carry those socks to your corner? Are they babies? Or, extra padding?"

"Sure wish you could speak, Bo!"

Sewall Phelps

....Picked up for shoplifting at 14, pregnant and a mother at 17, married and divorced at 18. In that order. She persists in referring to herself as my "problem child" and certainly her sisters would readily agree as would most concerned friends. Nevertheless, I keep seeing the childhood innocence that has never quite faded, the vulnerability still so easily manipulated by others, the caring openness that has so often worked against her rather than for her.

As a blond blue-eyed baby, she was particularly responsive to the wonder of the teeming world around her. She rarely cried, and her spontaneous laughter warmed our home as she delighted in some new discovery. Her first Christmas is recorded in photos showing bright eyes gazing upward at the multi-colored lights on the icicle-laden Christmas tree. The memory of her hurt look when the tree was undressed and carted away still remains.

During her years in elementary school, her fun-loving disposition was reinforced by a reckless quality as she seemed determined to keep up with her older sisters and their friends, but most especially, with any boys in the neighborhood. Wide-eyed, fun-loving, daring, and always trusting, she moved from early childhood into a more pressured time.

"Eighth grade was the turning point," she has often reflected. Popularity, particularly with the opposite sex, became paramount. She watched high school girls who to her naive gaze seemed the epitome of popularity. How did they do it? By the end of eighth grade she had tested some of her observations: smoking, drinking, sex, as fresh new experiences were all behind her at age 14. And somehow, a die was cast and moved forward with distressing inevitability, culminating in the present role of 13-year-old single mother with painful memories, thwarted dreams and what seems to be a daily struggle for a meaningful present and future.

That struggle involves coming to grips with guilt, as well as replacing irresponsibility gradually, very gradually, with self-discipline. It means facing the reality that until she is in control of every aspect of her life, a sour taste will keep surfacing, frightening her, and stacking guilt on top of guilt. Like a board game, she often moves six blocks forward only to be thrust back by the luck of the draw, or her own mistaken choices. But the awareness of need is there, the growth has not stopped and yes, time does keep ticking away. The innocence, the vulnerability, the trust, are gradually moving from weakness to strength. But very gradually.

As for me. Stand back. Let her do it herself. As when she was a toddler, watch her fall, but let her pick herself up. Accept the pain as the inevitable price of parenthood, but accept also the joy as the eyes of love perceive the tortuous process of "problem child" transformed into self-actualizing adult.

Anonymous

Being a writer, experiencing the process, and trying on the roles of conference participants were a worthwhile part of our Writing Project; I'd recommend that your project include opportunities for all three.

Licking County Board of

Education

Newark, Ohio

FOLLOWING THE RED-INKED ROAD

by
David Kass

Teaching writing is not a one-step process. A teacher cannot assign a composition on Monday, collect it a week later, grade it, and return it a week after that and expect the student to learn how to write from the experience. This is particularly true if the above exercise represents the total writing program for that class. The teacher in that circumstance will not teach students how to write, and runs the risk of devastating pupils and turning them away from writing by spilling great quantities of "blood" all over their papers and giving them no opportunity to enhance their skills before the chance for the next red-inked bloodletting is due a week later.

One of the misconceptions that can come from this, however, is that it is always wrong, therefore, to write comments on student compositions; that somehow comments traumatize our students and since that isn't nice to do, we should just put a grade on the paper. Again, if this one dimensional approach is unilaterally adopted, the student will not learn how to write.

We come then to the real question: What is the purpose of "grading" student compositions? If it is designed simply to put more grades in the book to justify a final grade, then there is no reason to emotionally damage the student by dipping the paper deeply into the red inkwell. Of course one could question the educational motives of a teacher whose only reason for giving an assignment is to fill the grade book. If marking the composition is done only to justify the grade on the paper, the teacher is using the marks as a defense mechanism to prepare for the question "Why did I get a 'D' and not a 'B'?" Of course having a paper well marked is useful for explaining a grade at times, but it shouldn't be the main reason. Finally we come to the only reason papers should be marked; that it is part of a multifaceted program designed to help students improve their writing. To be clear, let it be stated that as a single aspect of a complete writing program there is nothing wrong with noting the errors as well as strengths in each paper. Quite frankly, even in courses where writing is not the main purpose, but is as an aspect of the course, the instructor has an obligation to make corrections on the paper for the purpose of helping students improve.

There are, of course, people who sincerely believe that extensive marking is a waste of time because the comments are not read. In some cases that is true, but in many it is not. On a personal note, my eighth grade English teacher often explained that she looked forward to seeing red ink on her own writing because the feedback was useful two ways. The negative comments forced her to reevaluate her writing and work to improve it while the positive comments gave her a feeling of support and satisfaction. She was able to instill that feeling in me, and as I went through school I found that I did

look forward to seeing what comments were on my papers. The trail of red ink did help me become a better writer. Perhaps I am the exception, but I will try to show how, as part of an overall program, marginal comments can lead the student down the red-inked road to improved writing.

Before examining the specific student writing, some background on the course is in order. Composition 200 is a sophomore level class designed to examine basic writing concepts. It is one of two courses at Licking Heights High School which focuses exclusively on writing. The textbook used is the blue level COMPOSITION by the staff of the Writing Improvement Project, J.A. Christensen, et al. The book focuses on writing improvement without trying to specifically teach grammar. During a typical week we'll spend two or three days working in the textbook, one or two days of in-class composition writing, and one day of vocabulary work. Additionally students write in their journals an average of five times a week.

Although the section I teach was not labeled a "slow learners" class, the majority of the students have below average language skills. Writing single sentences was something most were not interested in doing, let alone writing entire compositions. In this regard I have used the journals as a motivational tool to encourage these "reluctant writers" to write. Journal entries are not graded. I do read them and give credit for completing the required assignments. With this a student can be a poor writer and receive an "A" for his journal. Since some of these students would normally have trouble doing "A", "B", or even "C" work, this helps them feel good about their writing, and encourages them to do each journal assignment.

Composition 200 is a one semester course and, at the time of this writing, we are only half way through it. Consequently this cannot be as full an analysis as would be possible if the course work were complete. We can, however, examine how much improvement there was based on what was expected to be learned during the first grading period of the course.

There were essentially three areas of concern during the first half of the course: improvement of overall planning, improved sentence structure, and unity in paragraphs. Obviously, although additional concerns will be added during the current grading period, attention will still be given to the three mentioned above.

My goal in teaching about planning was to have students recognize and utilize the major divisions of a paper, introduction, main body, and conclusion. The biggest problems have been with the introduction and the conclusion. For some reason students seem to have a difficult time understanding the concepts involved in writing introductions and conclusions.

For introductions I have tried to get my students to let the reader know what the paper was about without going into the details, and to catch the reader's attention with a good opening sentence. Some students are still struggling with this, but one student, Kam, has shown remarkable improvement in her introductions for the three major compositions written during the last grading period.

Kam's first composition was based on the journal assignment "Write

something you feel strongly about." As you will see from her introduction she is concerned about the treatment of handicapped people. In all cases where student writing is reproduced, it shall be kept as close to the original as possible.

1. "The composition I am writing about is what I feel
2. strongly about. That is people who make fun of handicap
3. people are irgnant because I know a young lady who most
4. happens to be a handicap - and she is the most beauciful
5. lady ever! And for one thing I don't make fun of her - or
6. laugh about her either."

Technical comments ranged from the quotation mark in line two to the suffix problems with "handicap," to the misspelling of "ignorant" and the incorrect hyphen use throughout. There were three major developmental comments that I made. With regards to her first sentence I told her not to announce her topic, but introduce it by telling about it; be more subtle. I also explained that her comment about people who make fun of handicapped people being ignorant "because I know a young lady who happens to be a handicap..." was not logical because her second point was not at all related to her first point. Finally I commented that her final sentence didn't relate to the original idea of the introduction.

Her second composition showed improvement in the way the first sentence was written, and the fact that it was more unified. In those areas the introduction represents a step forward. The second composition came from a journal assignment to write a paragraph about the person "you most admire and respect."

"The person I mostly admire and respect is my mom.
She is the kind of person who can help anybody out,
even her own family."

The first sentence is improved because she didn't announce her topic by saying "I am going to write about..." Instead, she just started in on her topic. The second sentence helps support why she admires her mother and gives a starting point for the rest of her essay. I did question her comment "ever her own family" because that made it sound as if her mother's family came second. Ironically, the second sentence in her journal is much better: "When ever our family has a crisis, mom is there and she knows what to do."

The third composition came from a journal assignment where students were to simply list the three wishes they would make if a bottle with a genie in it were found. Although there are technical errors in Kam's introduction, there is additional developmental improvement.

1. "One warm sunny morning while I was sitting on the
2. beach letting the sun soak in my body and thinking of
3. things to do until my blind date that night.
4. I saw something glittering in the sand. I decided
5. to go see what it was. The closer I came the more it
6. looked like a genine lamp."

There were three technical errors that I corrected. I pointed out the fragment that runs from line one to three, the incorrect paragraphing in line four, and the misspelling of "genie" in line six. From a developmental standpoint her first lines represented the best compositional opening Kam had written. She did not give the story line away in the first "sentence" and, had it not been a fragment, it would have particularly been successful in drawing the reader in. The clincher sentence, "The closer I came the more it looked like a genuine (sic) lamp." is an excellent point from which to begin the paper's main body.

The main problem students seem to have in writing conclusions is in understanding what a "conclusion" is. In the first set of papers most students just stopped writing when they felt they had nothing further to say. We then spent some time trying to come to grips with "conclusions." I tried an experiment. I told them to assume that they were walking down the street and saw a bloodied body on the sidewalk. They then saw a man with blood-covered hands holding a knife. I asked them what they made of the situation. Most of them stated that they felt the man with the knife had killed the person on the ground. I explained to the class that they had "drawn a conclusion;" that they had taken the facts as they knew them and made some final decision about those facts. We discussed how that concept could be transferred to their writing by assuming each paragraph represented a fact and their conclusion represented some final thought using all of those facts.

Kam again demonstrated an improvement in each of her papers in writing conclusions. Her conclusion to her paper about handicapped people was typical of the class' overall effort.

"The handicap people—all they want is to be friends.
That's all."

I briefly commented about the technical problems of the concluding remarks. Because her ending was so typical, I did not comment on the content of the conclusion knowing that class time would be spent both in the previously mentioned lesson and in conferencing.

Kam's second conclusion proves that occasionally students do listen when their teacher is talking. The improvement, while somewhat mechanical and stiff, is obvious.

"The conclusion I came to is that my mom is the most considerate, warmest person God put on Earth. That was my opinion about the person I mostly admire and respect."

Because of the extent of the improvement I chose to emphasize the positive aspects of this conclusion rather than negative things. I pointed out that she had written the conclusion drawing on the points she had made in the body and that the overall approach of the statement was better than in her first paper. I briefly pointed out that the conclusion shouldn't be announced just as the introduction isn't.

The third conclusion is difficult to evaluate in the same light as the others since the first two were expository and the third a narrative. Her

conclusion to her story of finding a genie's bottle and receiving three wishes seems such a natural end to the story that it might have been written this way even without the previous lessons. However, since it still seems to be an improvement over her first effort, it is included.

"After dinner sitting by the fire place and drinking champagne. Jerry asked me to marry him, so I said yes. Within a week we were married and living on a beach."

Technical notations included the fragment, a suggested change of "so" to "and," and the comment that the final sentence should be a part of the original paragraph. On the positive side, Kam avoided introducing the conclusion, and wrote an ending that was a natural finale for the paper.

As indicated earlier, these papers are from a course in progress. I believe that if Kam continues to show a similar level of improvement in the remaining weeks of the school year, she will, if nothing else, be able to organize an essay understanding what she is doing in the placement of material throughout the paper.

Unfortunately, the other two areas of concern, sentence structure and paragraphing, have not seen as dramatic an improvement as organizational matters have. Part of this may be their tendency to write as they speak. And some of them do not speak the language very well. Also, they have obviously developed some bad habits over the years, which have not been easily broken. In either case these areas are moving more slowly and gaining progress, particularly in sentence development, has sometimes felt like driving a car in neutral.

The textbook approaches writing sentences in a non-grammatical way. Instead it attempts to show students how to avoid such things as padded sentences, overloaded sentences, sentences containing non-related material, as well as several other kinds of problem sentences. The text does not mention fragments or run-on sentences. Re-examining the sample papers I found very few comments dealing with the problems the textbook dealt with, suggesting that I did not find them to be major problems. On the other hand there were an abundance of fragments and run-ons.

Kam's first composition contained three fragments; her second contained five fragments and run-ons; her third also contained five fragments and run-ons. These errors were present despite conferencing and class discussion. Kam is able to hear the difference when I've read her problem sentences to her but she has been unable to catch them as she writes. Other students have had similar problems in reducing the number of run-ons and fragments, although the number of problems per paper will vary, of course, depending on the student. There also seemed to be a relationship between good organization and good sentence usage. Papers which seemed well organized usually seemed to contain the best sentence construction.

There are four major problems my students have with paragraphs. They have problems in writing good topic sentences, writing good support sentences for those topics, remaining on the topic during the paragraph, and knowing

when to end one paragraph and start another. In effect, they have displayed every major problem possible in writing paragraphs.

This doesn't surprise me, because in some ways paragraph writing is the most difficult part of composition writing. Every paragraph is like a mini-composition with topic, support, and clincher sentences; yet each paragraph must also relate to a larger topic. The paragraph is the heart of the organizational pattern because a single misapplied paragraph can throw off the organization and understanding of a complete composition. In my own writing I often struggle to properly paragraph a segment of writing and I sometimes find myself disagreeing with the paragraphing choices made by professional writers. So it isn't surprising that proper paragraphing is difficult for high school sophomores to fully understand.

The three composition assignments used as the basis for this essay came before formal instruction in paragraphing began. Consequently only infrequent comments were made on papers regarding paragraph construction. I feel that the bulk of the comments should relate classroom instruction to the papers. In reviewing the sample papers I noted a few places where I had indicated a new paragraph was incorrectly started. I also noted several places where students tried to allow one sentence stand as a paragraph.

The textbook offers a fairly good format for paragraph instruction. One chapter deals with the basics by defining "paragraph," examining the topic sentence, and exploring ways of developing the topic into a paragraph. A second chapter deals with more advanced paragraph writing by discussing narrative, descriptive, explanatory, and persuasive paragraphs. Our main focus will be on the basics only, however, because this group appears fairly weak in the basics, and improvement here would be a great accomplishment.

One deviation from the text I teach is a technique which helps students write only sentences that relate to the topic. In this technique the student underlines the key words or phrases in the topic sentence. The student then tries to write sentences about the underlined sections. What follows is a "before" and "after" sequence from when I first tried this approach. The topic sentence was one suggested in the text.

"A person has to be taught how to fear. I'm not afraid of much. I don't like climbing ladders, but I don't know why. I'm afraid of failing this class, and I do know why. Roller coasters are fun-scary. I didn't go on them for a long time but now I do."

"A person has to be taught how to fear. Learning fear can be by experience or because someone else taught us how to be afraid. When I was a little kid I wasn't afraid of nothing. I would run up the ladder on a slide and belly-flop down like it was nothing. One day I fell off of the top and have been afraid of ladders ever since. Another thing. We were going to Cedar Point and I wanted to ride the roller coaster. My older brother kept saying how he almost fell out once & then he got sick. He got me so afraid I didn't go on it at all."

To be sure, there are technical problems even in the improved paragraph, but it can be seen that this technique, along with conferencing, helped this student do a better job in staying on the topic in the second paragraph. Incidentally, despite this student's fear of failing, he isn't going to.

I additionally try to teach students that paragraph organization is much like the organization of a full composition. The topic sentence lets the reader know what the paragraph is about much as the introduction serves the same purpose for the composition; the support sentences are much like the main body; and the clincher sentence can be compared to the conclusion of an essay.

Following these techniques, and those suggested in the textbook, I feel that there will be improvement in paragraphing by the end of the year. I do not expect all paragraphing problems to be solved, but I do expect that many of these students will need only minor refreshing next year on these fundamentals, and will be better prepared for junior level composition.

The trail of red ink does not, of course, end here. For students who enter college particularly, there is a lot more to learn, a lot more errors to make which will face correction through the red wand. The key is not to depend on marking papers as the sole basis for teaching students how to write. It must be part of an overall plan which includes positive instruction and positive reinforcement. Expectations must be discussed, and, in certain areas, class instruction must be given before a teacher can expect results from marking errors.

The program I am following is not perfect. While progress has been made in organization, there has been less made in sentence structure, and it is too early to see improvement in paragraph construction. Yet by using the marking of papers in combination with conferencing, well-planned classroom lessons and exercises, and journals the overall quality of writing in my classes has improved. My students no longer fear a blood bath. They realize that the red ink relates mistakes to classroom lessons, or offers praise where earned. If used correctly students will see the pen as leading them down the red-inked road to success and not a "dagger which they see before you, the handle towards your hand."*

Licking Heights High School
Summit Station, Ohio

*apologies to William Shakespeare

IN A STATE OF FLUX

by
BARB WHYTE

After fifteen years of teaching high school English, I have fallen into a state of flux, and I'm glad of it. I think that teaching composition will never be a static list of tasks again. Flexibility seems to be the key with all tasks oriented to the particular class and the teacher. Just because I did it last year and still have the old ditto is no reason to do it this year. I am finding new activities every day that are better than the old and discovering lost activities that I did fifteen years ago and now may want to try again.

Drip-Drop

Looking back on the first semester of Junior Composition and Freshman Composition which were two-thirds over before this project really took hold, I think there have been some successes directly due to my trying some new (for me) techniques. The drip-drop (my name) method has worked well. Students who could not write "the paragraph" can write little drips and drops of material which put together do become the classic paragraph. In a seven-day stretch, my ninth graders wrote well supported and organized paragraphs as follows:

- day 1 -- In the last ten minutes of the class, ask the students to make a list of the qualities they most admire in other people.
- day 2 -- Ask each student to read over his list and circle three which are most important.
- day 3 -- Ask each student to choose one of the three items circled and write at least three sentences telling why he admires that quality.
- day 4 -- Ask each student to repeat day 3 with his second circled quality, again writing at least three sentences.
- day 5 -- Ask each student to repeat day 3 with his third circled quality, again writing at least three sentences.
- day 6 -- Ask each student to write a topic sentence which encompasses the three circled items and a clincher sentence which summarizes the three items.
- day 7 -- Ask each student to rewrite the entire thing as a paragraph of at least eleven sentences.

For many of my ninth graders who had never before written successfully that long of an organized writing, it was highly successful.

Qualities That I Admire in an Adult

I admire an adult who is honest, kind, and happy. Honesty is an important quality because a person who is honest is looked up to by many people, young and old. They can be trusted with anything, especially secrets. They also tell the truth which is a very important quality in itself. Kindness is also an important quality, because a kind person is liked by just about everybody. They also respect other people and their values. One of the most important qualities, in my eyes, is happiness, because if a person is happy then everybody around them can be happy also. People also like to be around someone who is happy and joyful instead of mean and grouchy. One more thing, I think, that makes happiness important is that a happy person can have a lot of fun and can get along with just about everybody. Those are the reasons I think honesty, kindness, and happiness are important qualities in adults.

Qualities

I would like to have a lot of good qualities when I'm an adult. The one that I think is most important is to be an active person. I like to be active because it's something I like to do and it helps keep me in shape. Being active gives me a lot of confidence, which helps your personality too. Another quality that I like is to be in good humor. When I'm walking down the hallway smiling, it helps to make everyone's day better, especially mine. A very important quality to have, if I am going to be active in sports, is to be patient. I like to have a lot of patience which will help me when I'm doing almost anything. I really believe that patience is necessary to succeed in life. I hope that I can have these important qualities in life so that I can succeed.

The drip-drop method also worked well with my eleventh grade group of boys taking a required course in writing. I borrowed the topic from Keith Caldwell, speaker at the Basic Skills Conference on Written Communications, Columbus, Ohio, March 21, 1982. He referred to it as a saturation writing.

- day 1 -- Choose a place (barn, kitchen, garage) and describe only what can be seen.
- day 2 -- Describe the same place and tell what can be smelled, tasted, felt, and heard.
- day 3 -- Describe the people, animals, or objects with personality found in this place. Strive for images rather than merely height and weight.
- day 4 -- Write a dialogue one might hear there.
- day 5 -- Write an interior monologue one might have there.
- day 6 -- Write annotations to the dialogue and monologue with actions and thoughts for each.
- day 7 -- Put it all together in a saturation writing about one place, feeling free to cut and add as necessary.

The results were I thought excellent from this project.

My Favorite Spot

As I walk through the side door of the red and white garage, I see two overhead doors. At the side of each door are two long steel strips which hold the doors in their tracks. We have our red rototiller sitting by the door on the right side. The rototiller is covered with mud and the blades are entangled with weeds.

The fumes of gas and oil draw my eyes toward a large workbench piled with tools that I haven't ever seen. I know Dad will think I did this. As I hurry to put them into place, I hear the limestone gravel being kicked to the side as Dad walks in the door.

All at once the sunlight is blocked as Dad, who is as big as a buffalo, stands in the door. "What? What happened?" with the look on his face like he's going to kill me.

Oh, no, what do I do now? With my hands greasy and my shoulders slowly dropping to the ground as a camel does when it's being ridden, "Don't hit me, Dad, please."

Working on a Farm

Things never change. I walk in the barn every day at four o'clock and I am still struck by the smell of cows and hay, and I am still startled by the birds flying out of the barn as I come in to clean it. As usual the floor is still dirty from the morning's milking and the calves are bellowing wanting to be fed.

As I scrape the floor, the calves respond to my movements and although I can't see them, I am aware of their presence. I am also aware of the half-painted ceiling and the spider webs hanging from it and the same radio seeming to play the same old songs. To the right I still notice the red feed bin with feed in it waiting to be shoveled out. Sometimes I wish I would quit this job but I know if I do, I wouldn't be able to run around.

Journal

This semester in Junior Composition, I am most impressed with our successes in journal writing. The juniors write in their journals every day for the first ten or fifteen minutes on a topic I assign. The topics are open ended so that each student can express his or her own opinion and there is no right or wrong answer. I grade journals on credit only. I do not correct or comment critically on the material; I do note successes. Many students are producing a great deal of written work. We have certainly conquered writer's block. I try to write everything the students write which has been exciting for me as I had forgotten how much I enjoy shaping words and phrases into communicable ideas. Each day as the students write in their journals, I scribble in mine. We occasionally (once or twice a week) share our journal entries, and we all enjoy the revelations. My students now see me as a real person rather than a cardboard figure. I regard them as individuals too. This rapport is helpful in encouraging the students to write freely without fear of ridicule.

During the semester we have spent approximately 700 minutes writing on 63 various topics. The list which follows is only part of those topics but may be helpful for a teacher beginning a journal project:

1. What makes a super hero super?
2. If you could choose a super power, what would it be and why?
3. What is the perfect or best age to be?
4. What inanimate object are you most like and why?
5. Write a dialogue with a part of your body.
6. Describe a most embarrassing moment.
7. Write everything you know about the day you were born.
8. Describe a member of your family.
9. What's your sign and how do you fit it? (Display an astrological chart.)
10. Describe a first. (first date, first day of school, first time driving a car).
11. Describe the perfect parent.
12. Make a list of events that occurred in your childhood. You can't stop until the time is up.
13. Describe a family ritual or ceremony, (e.g. Sunday dinner, Christmas morning, Saturday mornings).
14. What would you do if you knew you were going to die in the very near future?
15. "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost.
16. Write an anecdote about the weather.
17. Describe your favorite meal using sensory words.
18. Describe your favorite monster.
19. Describe a room in your house as though you were blind, using all senses but sight.
20. Invent a vending machine.
21. Tell a joke or funny story.
22. Explain how to make your favorite sandwich.
23. Explain how to eat a particular food such as a pickle, an orange, a peanut butter sandwich, or whatever you choose.
24. Explain how to ride your favorite amusement park ride for the most enjoyment.
25. Which is more harmful and more prevalent in our high school- drugs or alcohol?
26. Does sexual harassment occur in our school?
27. Should all extra curricular activities be cut to solve economic problems?
28. What value does a college education have?
29. Should the legal drinking age be raised to 21?
30. Should abortion be legal?
31. Should the draft be re-established in full - for both men and women?
32. Should persons under the age of 18 have to have parental permission for medical treatment? Consider especially treatment of venereal disease, abortions, requests for birth control.
33. Having been given a poster or picture, describe and/or discuss it. (I cut up advertisements for posters to get miniature posters for journal writing).

Conferencing

I use conferencing in all my classes, before, during, and usually after every assignment. As I give an assignment, I move around the room talking with each student about or prewriting exercises. For example, I first had my above average ninth graders make a list of three things they were grateful for - serious or humorous - all together. I encouraged them to be open

and as silly or dramatic as they wished.

The next day they looked at their lists, and keeping in mind the audience (their peers) and the tone chosen (serious or humorous), they chose several items to write about in a paragraph. Again as they worked, I moved around the room. On the third day, each student had at least one peer evaluation of his work. He could have as many as time permitted. I encouraged the students to talk over the errors rather than mark all over the papers.

The final paper was due on the fourth day, an essay of at least one paragraph on what that person was grateful for. After enjoying reading them, I handed the essays back, taking another period to confer with each student on errors, corrections, what my marks meant, and especially on the good points of each essay.

Things I Am Thankful For

As Thanksgiving rolls around again, I am made aware of the many things I take for granted that are special to me. One of the most important things that I am thankful for is freedom. I feel very honored to have been born in America. Freedom can never be fully appreciated until it is lost so I'm sure I don't appreciate it as I should. I think that freedom of speech and just being free is great, but I believe the most important is freedom of religion. Our forefathers came to America because they couldn't worship how they wanted to in Europe. I think that it is wrong for someone to force other people to worship in his religion. People should be able to serve God however they feel they should, and in America people can do just that. Of all the things that I am thankful for, this is one of the greatest.

Things I Am Thankful For

We all have many things to be thankful for and these are some things I am thankful for. I am thankful I have friends because they are always there when I need them. They are also very helpful with a problem. Another thing I am thankful for is a warm, clean home. Even if it is small it is a place where you and your family can be together. One more thing I am very thankful for is my family. They always help me through any difficult times I have. They are always there when I need someone to talk to. They also are the most caring people in the world. Those are some of the things I am thankful for.

This type of counseling worked well with all my ninth graders, but it was more difficult with the eleventh graders who were unwilling often to allow conferencing to occur. But we tried. It benefited enormously those who were really working. Those who weren't putting any effort into the class didn't benefit, but they wouldn't have from anything. So if they wanted to hang out by the thermostat or the pencil sharpener, I ignored them. The others needed the conferencing to be successful.

Failures

Certainly, not everything I have tried this year has worked. The failures have been in some ways surprising. Eight dollars worth of strange ice cream flavors did not inspire the class to write sensory paragraphs of detail and image. The students ate the ice cream and wrote boring essays anyway. Showing films was not particularly successful either, although films were more inspiring than ice cream. However, these "failures" were mine and my students. Other teachers may have great success with these pre-writing exercises.

"Fluxtuation"

I feel sure that as I continue to experiment, there will be other methods which I will discover or rediscover to add to my ever changing repertoire of ideas. I view that with excitement and know that the influx of new materials will benefit both my students and me.

Licking Valley High School

THE ONE-ROOM SCHOOL REVISITED

by
Ron Walsh

On a Friday, late in August of the 1920's or 30's, a prospective teacher might have been taken to a township, east and north of Newark to view her first assignment as a teacher. On a sandy hillside, basking in the sun, would stand a well built frame one-room school called Welsh, Mount Pleasant, Fox Den, Wild Cherry, or Wilkins Run.

The schoolyard would have been recently scythed to clear it of the few weeds that grew during the summer in the eroding soil. Behind the schoolhouse was the coal shed and farther back among the trees the two buildings that served as toilet facilities: one for the boys and one for the girls.

Once inside, one would be in a vestibule with the bell rope hanging from the bell tower, a rusty tin sink (the waste water ran to the ground under the schoolhouse) and a water pail and dipper provided on one side.

Swinging doors led to the classroom. The floor was oiled as well as the large potbellied stove that stood in the middle of the room. The teacher shoveled many tons of coal into that stove, which occasionally belched a black soot that coated everything present at the time of its volcanic-like eruption.

At the front of the room were the teacher's desk and chair, and the "recitation bench" which faced the desk. The prospective teacher might sit down at the desk just to get the "feel of it" and thus experience the joy and fear of such an awesome responsibility.

She/he looked back over the desks--little ones at the front and then gradually getting larger toward the back in a stair step fashion. All were securely fastened to the floor and many marred by the blade of a bored boy's knife. In the rear of the room were two small rooms, one on either side of the vestibule. In them one would find shelves where lunch boxes would be put and hooks for coats and hats.

Another look at the front of the room showed the large slate black-board with several sticks of chalk and the hard wooden-backed erasers. Over the years, to get a long piece of chalk was a favor that children coveted. Chalk was never wasted because a wooden box was expected to last the entire school year.

On a shelf at the side of the room were a few well-worn books--each marked "Teacher's Text." These texts were merely student-copies embellished by margins filled with the instructor's many notes. They were not manuals

or keys, for every teacher was expected to "Know how to teach." A few very worn maps hung from a case over the blackboard. There were no children's books, for every child had to furnish his or her own books. Books were handed down in families and often traded with friends. And many children had to "get along" or "make do" with only a pencil and a tablet for several weeks or even longer if aid had to be secured to pay for their books. Another look around at the interior and then the new teacher went outside, locked the door, and surveyed the domain that would be his/hers for the next year or more.

The next thing on the agenda of a new teacher was to find a place to live. At this time in history, teachers boarded in the community where they taught. A board member might be able to tell of a family who had kept teachers over the years, and they might seek refuge there. The wife might have been a teacher and her wise counseling might help one over many rough spots that first year. The home was generally back a long lane and about a mile or less from the school. This distance was walked every morning and night during all kinds of weather. The school was never closed because of bad weather, and the distance seemed to be no problem. Many children walked one or two miles, and small children, during deep snows, were carried on the shoulders of older brothers. Absenteeism was seldom a problem.

The salary in the 1920's and 1930's for eight months was \$800, with perhaps an added 75¢ a month for janitor service. Since the teacher was expected to clean and keep her room comfortable, the board felt that the 75¢ was really a gift.

That first Monday morning of September dawned bright and clear. The rookie would arrive long before time for school to start, only to find the yard filled with children eager to get a glimpse of the new teacher. The first bell was rung a half hour before nine, and then on the hour the "tardy bell." All sizes filed into the room: tall sixteen year old boys with changing voices, and a hint of down on their upper lips, to shy little five-year-olds in their Sunday best, clutching new boxes of crayons. They were in all grades one through eight. Attendance and enrollment varied between twenty-five and thirty due in part to whether a large family moved in or out of the community.

School would usually begin that first morning with the singing of "America," a scripture reading, and the "Lord's Prayer." One class at a time would come to the recitation bench to recite. An effort was made to have each child recite during each quarter of the day. To recite meant to tell what they had read in the text, to say a poem, to read, or to work arithmetic problems on the blackboard. Memory work was considered beneficial and students memorized many poems, the "Preamble to the Constitution," Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," the states and their capitals, the Presidents in order, the times tables, and many other facts and dates. To aid in the memory work, the thing to be learned was often sung to the tune of a familiar song.

Older students helped younger ones with their lessons. Reading aloud was stressed, and a good oral reader was envied. Speed and mental computation ranked high in arithmetic. Many types of problems found in old

arithmetic books are left to computers today. A teacher "lost face" in the community if there was a problem he/she couldn't solve. Spelling at first was oral, but later homemade spelling pads were made. A bright yellow pencil with a red band at the top and a secure eraser spurred many a student to study for this prize. Spelling books contained long lists of words and were not of the workbook type. Because good penmanship was thought important; many hours were spent doing exercises that improved the uniform flow of ink from a Spencerian pen.

Discipline appears to have been stricter than in present day schools. Both the county supervisors and the parents expected the teacher to keep order. Any youngster who got a "whuppin" at school was sure to get another at home—if he or she were unfortunate enough to have a brother or sister who couldn't be bribed not to tattle. Country families expected much better behavior than the town folks came to accept at this time.

Most of the art work had to be creative because there was no practical way to duplicate material. In the early part of the 1930's it was possible to purchase a gelatine hektograph on which copies were laboriously made. With the aid of the hektograph many schools published a small newspaper. One such paper called The Tattler was published by the Welsh School in Mary Ann Township, Licking County, Ohio. The cost to subscribers was 1¢ per issue.

Supplementary books were unheard of except for a few discarded texts. Some schools were fortunate enough to get a chest of books from the State Library each year, Mr. L.C. Brown, Licking County's Assistant Superintendent would catalog them for the many rural one-room schools of Licking County. These books were used to get Reading Circle Awards. At the end of the school year they were returned to the county school's office. Those books were read and reread by students and parents alike. There was very little homework assigned except an occasional poem. If the teacher required that a book be taken home it was more likely to spend the night in a culvert or a hollow tree. Children had many farm-related chores to do at home and parents expected the teacher to do the teaching during school hours.

Water was generally carried from a nearby spring. By the time it arrived at the schoolhouse, the bucket was little more (often less) than half full. This would, of course, necessitate another trip during the next quarter of time.

The school was the center of community's activities. School programs were prepared for all the holidays, and few parents would miss such an event. Pie socials, box suppers, and the selling of seeds and gelatin puddings made enough money to buy many needed items—a gasoline lantern, a clock, a water cooler, stage curtains, a dictionary, a wheezy organ, or perhaps a bus trip to Columbus. An all day trip touring state buildings and prominent businesses, for many of the youngsters, could be the highlight of a school year.

On the coldest of winter days, recesses were spent inside where the children played games. Tick-tac-toe, Going to the Mill, Hide the Thimble,

and Dominoes were favorites. Many hours were spent with saw and hammer creating furniture from orange crates and scrap lumber. The girls with thread, needle, and bits of left over material made gifts for parents and friends. Of course, on nice days every one was outside playing Board Ball, "Andy-over," Dare-base, Marbles, and Hide-and-Seek. The ball more often than not, was made from an old sock tightly bound with used wrapping cord and securely stitched. Some mothers were expert at making serviceable balls, and most were willing to be drafted for the job. The woods that surrounded the school-yard was a marvelous place for Cops-and-Robbers or an Indian Raid and accounted for a couple of broken arms. In winter there were snow forts, snowball battles, and after a fresh snow an exchange game of Fox-and-Geese.

A somewhat hot lunch was provided by each child bringing food from home in a glass jar that could be heated in a pan of water placed on top of the stove. Even cocoa was often made from milk brought from home.

An honest effort was made to inspire, to make the work meaningful, and to widen the horizon of the children. Pen pals from all over the world would send letters, cards, articles, and information that added to the otherwise drab geography facts.

In many schools of that time, the last day of the year involved an "all school" picnic. That, more often than not, was a community affair. The day was spent in nostalgic reminiscence by the older (uncles, aunts, and grandparents) attendees. The younger people played baseball, had an egg toss, played horseshoes, or the like.

Perhaps you think that in a school without movies, film strips, slides, and all the various audio-visual aides currently used in contemporary schools that the educational experience was tiresome and boring. Be assured that the one "roomer" was not. In spite of the handicaps and hardships of the one room school many children grew into successful men and women in both the business and professional world.

EPILOGUE

In retrospect, one may view the one-room school as a primitive form of educational endeavor. However, it is not the intent of this writer to pass judgment. The intent is to present an over-the-shoulder glance at the roots of our present system of schools.

Herewith, I give the reader the results of my investigation. I leave it to you to decide the value of a now extinct approach to the instruction of young impressionable minds.

Mary Ann Elementary School
Newark, Ohio

NEW ENDINGS FOR "LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS"

by
Alice Phillips

The writings presented on the next pages were done by eighth grade students as a class assignment. They had read the story "Leiningen Versus the Ants." This is the story of a Brazilian plantation owner who thought that his super intelligence could overcome any obstacles he might encounter while farming in the jungles of South America.

His plantation was being attacked by giant, voracious ants that seemed to have more than instinct guiding them. He first tried to drown them by flooding a ditch, then tried to burn them with petrol, and finally he defeated them by flooding his whole plantation. However, in the battle with the ants, he was nearly eaten alive by them. The story ends with two of his peons talking. One asks, "Will he live?" and the second one replies, "He will if he wants to."

The students felt as if they were left "hanging." They wanted the story to have a more definite ending. The assignment to write an ending had two purposes:

1. to get students to use their imaginations and go in any direction in writing they wanted whether it followed the story line, science fiction, comedy, etc.;
2. to get students to write in a clear, concise manner using all the tools they had learned in grammar.

There were both peer and teacher conferencing and each person had at least three drafts. Here are a few chosen papers in the final form with only minor corrections in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation being made:

David Fisher

David is an "A" student. He is very grade conscious, challenges the teacher when a graded paper is returned if the grade is not "A", has an active mind, and always uses correct sentence structure. This is David's ending for "Leiningen Versus the Ants."

The worst was temporarily over for Leiningen, who was still quite unconscious from his ordeal. The peons spent the night watching after Leiningen and devouring food and drink to celebrate what they thought was a victory over the ants. What they were unaware of was that half an hour after Leiningen opened the dam, a few huge trees got themselves jammed on the banks of the ditch, hindering the flow of water through it.

By nightfall the water that had flooded part of the plantation receded into the river carrying thousands of ants with it. With it being so dark the peons didn't notice that thousands more remained.

Just before dawn one of the peons noticed there were thousands of ants assembled on the opposite bank. Before he could yell out a warning to his comrades, the ants had started down the bank into the ditch.

Without the moral support of their bedstricken leader, Leninigen, the peons were confused and in a frenzy. They fled to take refuge in the main house, the barn, and other surrounding buildings.

When all of the ants had crossed the ditch, they headed directly for the barn and its surrounding buildings. It was easy for them to get in because of the spaces between the boards that made up the buildings. Within a few minutes the screams of men in agony could be heard coming from the barn.

The men in the house were more fortunate. Leninigen had regained consciousness momentarily. He was informed of the situation they were in, and he instructed them to close off every possible entrance into the house. He then slipped into unconsciousness again.

The peons did what they were instructed to do but forgot about a window in the attic. Being born and raised in the Brazilian wilderness, their houses were primitive. They didn't know that an attic stairway on the ceiling of the second floor led to another floor.

Thirty minutes later the ants were climbing the outside walls of the house looking for a way to get in. Sure enough, they came into the attic through the open window.

Leninigen regained consciousness and asked if they checked the attic for places of entry. One peon acting too fast and without thinking pulled down the attic stairway before anyone could stop him.

Thousands of ants poured onto the second floor. They attacked every man in the house eating them to the bone. Minutes later, everyone lay dead and devoured.

Lance Laughman

Lance wrote the story under pressure. I conferenced with him on several occasions and each time he resented any suggestions I would give him. When I originally asked the class to sign release forms to permit printing of any story I might choose, Lance did not sign one. Only after his story was chosen did he sign the consent form.

Leiningen jumped across the ditch and the ants immediately started to crawl up his boots. It didn't matter how fast he ran, the ants still got on him.

Somehow the ants had gotten under his boots and he could feel them biting his legs.

By the time he got to the weir, the ants were on his face trying to get in his ears and nose.

When he tried to open the weir, it took all of his strength to do it. He struggled and struggled to open it, and he finally did. By then the ants had practically covered his body.

As he tried to hit the ants off his face he accidentally knocked off his goggles. The ants immediately went at his eyes. Leiningen could not stand the pain. He began to run through the field with his hands over his eyes.

He finally ran all the way to the river where he heard the running water. He stopped. He knew that if he jumped into the river he would probably be eaten by alligators and piranhas, but he could not stand the biting of the ants. He kept thinking ants, alligators, piranhas, ants, alligators, piranhas. He knew both were deadly.

He finally decided that he had no other choice but the river. If he stayed on land he would die for sure. If he jumped in the river he might have a chance. He finally slid into the river, but so did the alligators.

Mike Owens

Mike has not been doing well this year in most of his classes, including English. This is the first assignment I have been able to get him to do. He got really excited about the prospect of perhaps having something he'd written put into print. I conferenced with him at least four times and he had peer conferencing.

Leiningen went to let the water out of the gate so that it would wash most of the ants away. When he got to the dam, he saw ants all over the place. He put his hands on the wheel to turn it. Immediately, ants began crawling up his arms. He turned the wheel as hard as he could, the water started coming out. He knew that he had to get to the petrol ditch to get the ants off of him. He also had to get out of the way of the water before the alligators and piranhas got through the gate. The water was getting up to his knees. When he felt something had his leg. He looked back. . . it was an alligator. He started running as fast as he could. The ants were getting under his clothes, they were biting and eating his flesh. It hurt so much that he thought he wasn't going to make it. Then he

saw the petrol ditch. Leiningen looked behind him. He saw the alligator. He started running faster. He got to the ditch and jumped in. Killing the ants. Leiningen just lay there for a minute or two and got up and went to his hut and lay down, but he didn't get back up. Did Leiningen defeat the ants or did the ants defeat Leiningen?

Scott Thwaites

Scott has been very creative in his writings this year. He has a knack for remembering and rewriting material he has read, and he especially enjoys creating his own material. He works very diligently at writing, but he is not nearly as interested in doing other studies.

When Leiningen woke up, he was in a hospital all alone. When a nurse walked in, Leiningen did not notice that she had entered, for he was thinking of something else his plantation. When he realized that she had entered, he demanded that she tell him if the plantation and all the peons (plantation workers) had made it or if something else had happened.

The nurse paid no attention to him and ended up walking out the door and down the hall.

Now when Leiningen saw this, he thought something bad had happened to his years of work, and then very quickly he calmed down and started thinking of what if the peons ran out of petrol (gasoline) and the ants had taken over the plantation house. He went to sleep thinking of what the nurse had told him when he was at his plantation, and wondering if he would live or die. The nurse had told Leiningen that all the ants, or most of them, were gone, but were they or was the nurse just giving him a reason to live?

When his thoughts had cleared, Leiningen remembered what the nurse had done, just ran out on him without giving him any answer to the question he had asked.

Leiningen decided to get up and see for himself what had really happened to his plantation. When he got up he could still feel the pain left there after the ants had eaten almost half the flesh from his body.

When he got to the door, blood started pouring out of his left side where some of his bone was still showing, and for the first time in his life Leiningen screamed and screamed. During his screaming, the doctors and nurses arrived and immediately took him to surgery and began operating. It took almost two hundred stitches to close the wounds.

Leiningen awoke a second time in his room and almost couldn't move because of so much pain.

Suddenly, all of his peons, and family came running in saying things like, "They're all gone, We're saved." and a lot of other news.

Then they all got quiet and the District Commissioner walked in and handed Leiningen a plaque that said "Most Courageous Man Alive ... Leiningen." The Commissioner said, "That man is very courageous, going through so much trouble for his home, family, and workers."

Then Leiningen thought of the nurse who had run out on him without saying a word and the District Commissioner simply said, "Oh... her, ... Why, she's deaf."

CONCLUSION

Of all the writing I have asked the students to do this year, I think they enjoyed this the most and worked the hardest on it. One reason for this is that they had something to start from, meaning the story of Leiningen. I have found that to ask students of this age to write about a topic without giving them an idea of where to start is next to impossible for positive results. I do feel, however, that this project was a success.

Lakewood Junior High School
Hebron, Ohio

**STIMULUS TO TEACHER GROWTH:
THE LICKING COUNTY WRITING PROJECT**

by
Betty Lou Stull

After sixteen years of teaching Language Arts, I suppose it's normal to sometimes feel one has gotten into a rut. The assignments that seem to work with a minimum of complaint from students, the order of units, the materials distributed, often acquire a comfortable repetitiveness. The only impetus that moves me out of my complacent routine has been the workshops I have periodically attended, including the most recent, the Licking County Writing Project.

During the years that I most intensely combined homemaking, child-rearing, community service and teaching, such opportunities for growth were, by choice, virtually non-existent. As I look back on those years, they were much more drab and less innovative than the more recent ones when I have tried to enrich my teaching by participation in a variety of in-service experiences. My assumption is that any teacher who reads this article probably already knows the value of the sharing of experience and insight that comes when one participates in such workshops. Therefore, if we care about our profession and, albeit, our students, we need to verbally share our enthusiasm for such events with our less involved colleagues, even to the point of passing on issues of FOCUS, ENGLISH JOURNAL, and materials from workshops in hopes that they too may learn that getting out of that rut is more fun and more productive than wallowing in it.

To show the excitement that can be generated for both students and teachers by breaking with comfortable procedures and venturing into here-to-fore unexplored territories, I offer parts of a journal in which I kept recording my experiences with a one semester Creative Writing class in which I consciously tried to design the course utilizing ideas from this project. Some of the pieces of this experiment included pre-writing exercises, conferencing, less grading, free writing and my first attempt at designing a poetry writing unit. My apologies if this is all "old hat" to others, for I can honestly say that it reflects 12 weeks (thus far) of one of my more satisfying teaching experiences.

REFLECTIONS

1/19/82

I feel my usual sense of insecurity at the beginning of a new semester before I meet my students. It's easier somehow when I actually confront them in the classroom. Right now, they are virtually faceless entities. My major source of concern is my Creative Writing class, a course I haven't taught before. Since there is no text, I will be designing the course, trying to

provide a variety of writing experiences. I guess it's not only the students that are faceless at this point; I find it difficult to sketch out exactly what those experiences should be. Oh, for the perfect textbook! Our writing project seminars and materials provide a wealth of ideas, some helpful, some contradictory, but certainly none laying out the perfect map for the teaching of writing. I am comforted by a statement I came across in an article "Writing from O.K.-ness" in *THEY REALLY TAUGHT US TO WRITE*. The author, Charles Spurgeon, stated that he didn't think we could teach anyone to write. He suggested that the teacher's role was to "provide excellent stimulation and encouragement for written communication through Teacher-Student interactions on the objective, problem-solving level of Adult-Adult."

That fits in with my idea that classroom atmosphere is a central key in any learning process. I think I will begin with some prewriting exercises designed to develop that "Learning Community" or "Writing Community" that June Berkley referred to at our last session. Maybe then something worthwhile will be generated as we muddle through the semester together.

1/20/82

Survived one day. Thank goodness it's a fairly small class. I'll feel more free to experiment. They seem to be a very pleasant non-threatening group. I have had exactly half of them in other classes. After letting them know that our warm-up each day would be five spelling words, we moved into a circle and played "The Name Game" from *STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE COMPOSITION PROCESS*, my favorite NCTE publication on writing. Everyone told what name they wanted to be called, why, and what their favorite animal was. Each person then introduced everyone who had gone before. We had fun, lots of laughing which I love, and we definitely know each other's names!

1/21/82

Today we filled out a values questionnaire (from *STRATEGIES*) and then shared our answers. The ones that were hardest for all of us had to do with what to do about aged parents and the one relating to death. I pointed out that each of the values questions was a potential writing topic. The group seems comfortable with each other even though I know they are not close friends outside of class for the most part. I told them that tomorrow we would be writing and I suggested four topics: 1) A character sketch or impression of someone in the room (drawing on the name game); 2) A topic related to the values questionnaire; 3) Something I'm Proud Of; 4) Description of this classroom, including both the physical as well as general atmosphere

1/22/82

A good writing period. They worked all period, occasionally checking out something with me or another student as I had suggested was appropriate. No problems at all. Papers are due next class period.

1/25/82

Everyone handed in papers--no one late--and they seem to have followed the form that I gave them. I have told them that I will try to conference

with them on their papers, in some cases will suggest a rewrite and that all papers should be saved in a folder. My intent is to circle the grammatical points I want to discuss with them, give any suggestions to improve content that I can, but not until I have tried to help them analyze the strengths and weaknesses themselves. Near the end of the six weeks I will have them hand in at least three papers they are particularly proud of, and these then will be a large factor in their grade. How I wish I could forget the grade and just let them write without grade pressure. However, I must admit at the moment they don't seem to feel pressured!

Today I gave them copies of three essays (STRATEGIES) and, in groups of three, had them function as teachers and decide what each writer of the essay should focus on to improve his writing. Each group reported the priorities they had set, we listed them on the board and discussed whether they were priorities that were applicable to evaluation of our papers. They were concerned with spelling, punctuation and inadequate proofreading. Surprisingly, they were picky about titles, which I've never emphasized in my teaching. They noted some points about organization and repetition too. They seem much more oriented to mechanics in evaluation than to content. Didn't quite finish the evaluation, but will conclude it tomorrow.

1/27/82

I think one of the more exciting experiments I've played with this year is "free writing." I'm probably oversold on its value because the few times I've used it, it's always been a good class experience—they actually think it's fun! From my point of view, I find the "flow" of their writing is usually much more coherent and communicative.

I used it first last semester in Precollege English to give them a chance to vent their feelings, frustrations, and problems about the research process. Ten minutes of writing without stopping, not to be graded, no conscious attention to mechanics, just keep the pen moving and try to stay on the subject. Ten minutes gleans approximately a page and a half from even my least productive students.

Today in Creative Writing, I explained the process and my own fascination with it. Then I had them draw two cards from the box I use for impromptu speeches. They chose one and we were off and writing. Mine was "Radio" and I found it a rather nostalgic topic to meander on about. Some of the topics they chose included Privacy, Money, Weekends, Closets, Winter, and Breaking the Telephone Habit. Almost everyone got at least a page and a half again. Everyone held up their papers to show how much they had written and there was some surprise that ten minutes produced so much volume. One thing we noted was that Teresa and I are the only two writers who paragraph automatically in that kind of composing process. Apparently for everyone else that comes later. I collected the papers, wanting to compare the style with their first compositions. I find these really potentially more real and alive.

I think it would be fun to take a group of students and have them free write for a certain time period everyday for six weeks, nine weeks, some period of time. Just let the writing slack up and see if it automatically improves. Then maybe in another period of time, pick out favorites from the

stack, rewrite, and revise into more final form. Sometimes I wonder if we don't overteach writing and thus squeeze the natural flow out of it.

1/29/82

Today I passed out a sheet with 13 "patterns" for organization. I can't remember the source, but so many students seem to have trouble grasping what is meant by "organization." Once you get past "chronological" and "space," anything logical eludes them. Hopefully, the patterns will make organization more clear. We conferenced over their first compositions and it went well. They worked today and will work Monday on a revision of the free writing we did on Wednesday. I thought the patterns might be helpful for that writing since there probably needs to be a complete revision from "free-writing" to final draft. Or does there?

2/2/82

Before handing in their revision of last week's free writing exercise, I had them attach a half sheet of paper stating the purpose of the paper, (to describe, inform, provoke thought, etc.) and also to give a point by point summary of their organization. It seemed to be a real struggle for them as a couple immediately decided they had no organization. Then I pointed out that both of the last papers they had written might be classified as informal essays and we read some award winning student essays from recent LITERARY CAVALCADES, particularly looking at organization. (Saving and clipping all those issues did finally pay off!) Then I passed out WRITING magazine, January issue, which is devoted to the informal essay. The class will do some reading in it and bring in examples of interesting informal essays from the newspaper to share tomorrow.

2/8/82

I decided to finish up our work with informal essays focusing on descriptive writing. Today, much to their delight, I gave each student a handful of barbecue potato chips which they were to describe, appealing to as many of the senses as possible. Tomorrow they will share their short descriptive essay with the class. Much to my delight, one of the results of our rather informal format is their willingness to read their compositions to each other. They have been sensitive and encouraging to the more hesitant members of the class. One of our more successful readings resulted recently from a period of writing as we listened to a record of an "Alpine Blizzard." Some excellent descriptive essays and some spooky ghost stories were generated by the record's whistling winds and rattling shutters.

2/10/82

Today I began using a sound-filmstrip series "Writing: From Imagination to Expression." (Guidance Associates) I will use it as a motivator periodically throughout the semester. The section I am now using follows through with our focus on the descriptive essay, presenting a series of pictures intended to involve students so they can experience images with all their senses. They will be making comparisons using similes and metaphors. Next week I will use it to explore "viewpoint" in writing and in the final six

weeks of the semester when we begin to develop short stories, the filmstrip's sections on setting, mood, plot, theme and character will be helpful.

Enough of my journal. Suffice to say that the positive attitudes expressed in that first six weeks are still present today as we complete the second six weeks. Our experiences together this six weeks have been enriched by the use of a very creative series of grammar films borrowed from our county office. They are excellent examples of "creative" grammar review. Two other films, "The River" and "Study in Wet" have been eased comfortably into our format. We have completed a three-week unit on poetry writing culminating in a poetry notebook including a combination of original poetry and favorite works discovered through browsing in various collections of poetry. At the moment the students are putting the finishing touches on an advertising campaign for an original product. The campaign includes a television or radio commercial, advertisement for a full-page magazine ad, filmstrip, and mockup of the product. Each two-person team will be presenting their completed campaign to the class. This project grew out of the February issue of WRITING magazine which focused on advertising.

It appears now that my concerns related to the de-emphasis of grades were unfounded. Perhaps students are not so motivated by grades as I thought. At the end of the second six weeks of the course, I asked them to evaluate the experience thus far, to help me in my planning for the course in the future. Their comments were supportive of the various approaches used:

"This class has been a real experience. It seemed a whole lot easier to turn in good material, instead of trying to compete for a grade."

"I feel that this class has given me a new outlook on the way we can do things creatively. The way we got to know each other at the beginning of the semester seems to put us more at ease. All in all, this class is a joy to be in."

"I like this class pretty well. I didn't like the poetry very well because I really don't like writing it. And about the grading I like it much better than any other grading system because it gives me a chance to improve my grade! And my writing and spelling."

"This class seemed fun because we always had a good topic to write about. This is the best English class that I can remember having."

"I like this class because our assignments are enjoyable and are explained well. We have good discussions. I like the way we're graded because it gives us a chance to pick out our most liked work and then have it graded."

"This class was not at all what I expected. I was ready to write and be graded on everything I wrote. I must say I like the way that the papers are not graded. It gives one the chance to correct or improve his papers. The poetry notebooks are an excellent idea. We will be able to save these and look back on them in the years to come. My favorite project so far has been the advertising project."

"I thought it was fun having group discussion and getting to

know each other. Now we are more comfortable working in unison. It is much better being graded only on the papers I pick because sometimes I can't write about a certain subject and it'll turn out horrible."

"This class is fun and exciting and very unique compared to others. The atmosphere is great. The way you issued assignments made it easy to create a story or poem. In other classes you were to just accomplish poetry from your own minds without any help with forms or patterns. I was glad everything wasn't graded, or if you didn't or couldn't get any ideas, it really didn't hurt your grade much. Mostly I like the way you graded our stories. Some teachers would change a lot of things in your stories to the way they like them. You corrected some things and made suggestions, but you didn't change the story to how you wanted it!"

Maybe next year, another group of students might not be as enthusiastic as this particular group, but their enthusiasm certainly came at the right time for this sometimes insecure teacher. First, I will not be so wary in the future of straying from the comfortable confines of my past routines. I need to relearn more frequently the value of learning not only from success, but from failure. Secondly, I doubt that I will ever feel the need to have a textbook for a class such as this. One of the advantages of having taught for a number of years is the growing accumulation of material which, of course, no English teacher ever throws away. I have many textbooks, clipped articles, endless sources of information to meet the needs of each individual group. Sometimes one textbook can be a crutch that stifles creativity. Finally, I will continue to seek out such opportunities for growth as offered by participation in the Licking County Writing Project. The books, the handouts, the variety of speakers and the interaction with other teachers at times made me very much aware of my own inadequacies and limitations as a teacher. But it did inspire me to continue to try new approaches so that I can at least always be at my own cutting edge as a teacher. Let us continue to provide this kind of opportunity for those in our profession. We can all benefit from such experiences.

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